Sūrah al-An‘ām

A Brief Look at Chapter 2

On Sūrah al-Mā’idah ended Chapter 1 of the Qur’ān, as has been explained in the prelude to this exegesis. From Sūrah al-An‘ām begins Chapter 2, and consists of four *sūrahs*: al-An‘ām, al-A‘rāf, al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah. Of these, the first two are Makkan and the last two are Madīnan. In Sūrahs al-An‘ām and al-A‘rāf, the people of Makkah are addressed.

In Sūrah al-An‘ām, basic issues pertaining to monotheism, the hereafter and prophethood are discussed and the real religion of Abraham (sws) is explained. The bases of reasoning are the signs found in human nature and intellect and those found around them or on those universals which the Arabs accepted and which were true as well.

In Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the element of delivering warning is dominant. In it, the Quraysh are explained the consequences of a messenger’s preaching among a people and what they will face if they persist in his denial, the laws and principles of God in this matter and historical evidence in this regard. They are warned that if they do not desist from their wrong attitude with their messenger, they should wait for the coming of an evil day for them.

In Sūrah al-Anfāl, the believers are told to do away with their weaknesses and remain united in obeying God and His messenger. They are also roused to war against the disbelievers of the Quraysh. It is openly proclaimed that they no longer have any right to be the custodians of the House of God; its real Abrahamic heirs are the believers. The latter are directed to not be over-awed by them as the time of their humiliation and punishment has arrived. If they do not desist from their ill-ways, they will be routed and there will be none who will give them refuge in this world or the next.

In Sūrah al-Tawbah, an open ultimatum is sounded to the Quraysh. They have only two options left: accept Islam or die. The believers are told to cut off all types of relations from them. Those who maintained secret ties with them because of kinship are severely reprimanded, and they too are given two clear options: to become true believers after cleansing themselves of all the filth of hypocrisy or face the fate destined for the enemies of God and His messenger.

In the light of this background, if readers deliberate on the contents of this group, it will become evident that all four of these *sūrahs* are arranged in a very meaningful sequence. Sūrah al-An‘ām conclusively communicates the truth to the Quraysh. Sūrah al-A‘rāf sounds a warning to them. Sūrah al-Anfāl asks the believers to prepare for *jihād* and the divine decision is taken to depose the Quraysh from the custodianship of the House of God. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, an ultimatum is sounded to the Quraysh and the Hypocrites are given a final warning.

Group 1 of the Qur’ān is directed to the People of the Book. If the Quraysh are addressed, it is only in a secondary way. On the other hand, Group 2 is basically addressed to the Quraysh and the People of the Book are only mentioned in a secondary way. There is also a basic difference in the nature of reasoning of both groups because of the addressees. In Group 2, arguments are mostly drawn from the signs found in human nature and intellect and in the world around human beings. However, in Group 1, the basis of argument are things which the People of the Book acknowledged. In Group 1, the People of the Book are deposed from religious leadership and their place has been given to the believers. In Group 2, the Quraysh are deposed from the custodianship of the House of God and this service is consigned to the believers.

This is a general description of the complete group. Now each of the *sūrahs* shall be taken up individually for the purpose of their explanation. With the help and blessings of God, we begin with Sūrah al-An‘ām.

Theme

As pointed out earlier, the Quraysh are addressed in this *sūrah*. They are invited to profess faith while arguments in favour of monotheism, the hereafter and prophethood of Muḥammad are furnished. They are simultaneously warned that if they do not accept faith they should be prepared to meet the fate destined for nations that deny their respective messengers. It may noted that the people of Arabia were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and they claimed that they follow his religion. For this reason, those arguments are presented before them which Abraham (sws) had presented before his own people so that the Quraysh know what is the actual religion of Abraham (sws) and who are its real followers: the Prophet (sws) or the Quraysh.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-5): Some obvious arguments in favour of monotheism and the hereafter are pointed to. Wonder is expressed at the aversion of the Quraysh from these self-evident arguments. Denying the Qur’ān is tantamount to denying the truth which will have its consequences. Whatever the Qur’ān is informing them of is destined to happen.

Verses (6-7): Those who deny God’s Messengers were divinely punished. Early history of the Arabs is referred to.

Verses (8-11): The Prophet (sws) is assured that the greatest of miracles will not be able to convince these rejecters. Even if the miracles they demand from him are shown to them, they will still not desist from denial. People similar to them also made fun of messengers that came before him. Ultimately, they were inflicted with the very punishment they had made fun of. The Prophet (sws) is asked to direct their attention to their history.

Verses (12-13): Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. He has made mercy mandatory upon Himself. Hence it is essential that He bring about a Day of Judgement.

Verses (14-18): Acquittal is declared from polytheism. Good and evil are in the hands of God. Everyone and everything is subservient to His power. He is all-wise and all-knowing.

Verses (19-24): The decisive evidence for monotheism and polytheism is from God and He bears witness in favour of the former. The Qur'ān too has been revealed with this evidence. True People of the Book are aware of it. Only the very unfortunate ones will remain deprived of professing faith in it. Adherents to polytheism are imputing falsehood to God. Such oppressors will not succeed. When on the Day of Judgement, they would be asked about the partners they associated with God, they will be taken aback and will have no answer.

Verses (25-32): Even if these people listen to the call of faith, it is not to understand and accept it; it is merely to counter it with foolish arguments. Instead of learning a lesson from the Qur'ān that narrates to them the anecdotes of those nations who earlier rejected the truth, they call it to be a tale of the ancients. Their eyes will only open when they will stand near Hell. At that time, they will express regret and sorrow on their wretchedness and will yearn to go back to the previous world so that they could accept faith. Today they think that the life of this world is all that there is. On the day they will be brought forth before their Lord, they will longingly express sorrow on their misfortune and on wasting their previous life.

Verses (33-39): The Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not be sad if these people are making fun of him for not fulfilling their demand to be shown a sign of punishment. They are not making fun of him; they are actually making fun of God. For this reason, he should leave their matter to God. Prophets before him also faced similar circumstances and they showed patience. After that, God's help came. This is God's established practice and it never changes. He should not worry in this regard. Only they will profess faith who have the ability to acknowledge the truth. Those whose hearts are dead will not accept faith even if they see the greatest of signs. God's heavens and earth are replete with signs but what can they avail the blind.

Verses (40-50): These people demand a sign of punishment. The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them that if this punishment comes, how will they protect themselves? Previous nations are referred to. They too asked their respective messengers to show them signs. At this, God inflicted them with various calamities. However, instead of becoming attentive towards God, their hearts hardened even more. As a result, they were uprooted by God. It is declared by the Prophet (sws) that he is not the owner of God's treasures nor does he claim to know the unseen world. He only follows what is revealed to him from God.

Verses (51-55): The Prophet (sws) is told that only those people will benefit from this Qur'ān who have fear of God and the hereafter. So he should warn them through it. As for those who demand miracles, he should ignore them. As for those who seek God's pleasure and want to listen to his message, he must not distance them from himself because these arrogant people are demanding this from him. If these people do not come to him because these poor people are in his presence, he should leave them alone. He is not responsible to make them accept faith. Their own affluence and the poverty of the poor has become a trial for them. The Prophet (sws) should nevertheless welcome these poor Muslims to his gatherings and give them glad tidings.

Verses (56-67): The Prophet (sws) is directed to proclaim his aversion to polytheism because it has no proof. He has clear evidence with him whereas these disbelievers deny it and demand a sign of punishment. The Prophet (sws) does not have the authority to show it; it is in God's authority. The life of every person is in God's hands. He can send His torment whenever He intends from where He desires. Every event has an appointed time. These disbelievers will soon know.

Verses (68-70): The Prophet (sws) is advised to not entangle himself in debate with these disbelievers when he sees that these disbelievers have been overcome with animosity. He should just ignore them as his task is to just to remind and advise them. When he sees that they do not want to listen to him, he should leave them to themselves. They will bear its consequences as he is not responsible to make them accept faith.

Verses (71-73): The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that once the truth has become evident and God's guidance has arrived, it is only their wretchedness that can still make them wander away. The Prophet (sws) and his companions will tread the same path as has been specified by God.

Verses (74-83): The argument in favour of monotheism communicated by Abraham (sws) to his nation is referred to.

Verses (84-90): Prophets and messengers prior to Abraham (sws) and those after him in his progeny are briefly alluded to. It is emphasized that the real guidance is the one these prophets have pointed to. The Prophet (sws) should strongly adhere to it. He should not care about the disbelievers of the Quraysh if they have decided to deny this guidance. God will bring forth others to support it.

Verses (91-92): An objection floated by the Jews in the ears of the Quraysh is cited and answered.

Verses (93-94): The claim of the foolish that they too can present the same discourse as the one presented by the Prophet (sws) from God is refuted. They say that divine revelation also descends to them.

Verses (95-99): Arguments of monotheism drawn from the world around human beings are presented.

Verses (100-105): Polytheism is refuted and the Quraysh are warned that once guidance has come to them, he who still chooses the path of error will himself be responsible for it.

Verses (106-108): The Prophet (sws) is directed to strongly adhere to divine revelation and ignore the Idolaters. The believers are told that without any justification they must not disgrace the idols and deities of the disbelievers so that in return, in frenzy, they say something about God.

Verses (109-111): The oath of the disbelievers is refuted that they will accept faith if at their demand they are shown a miracle. It is stated that if they are shown all kinds of miracles, even then those who have by that time have not accepted faith will never do so.

Verses (112-117): An established practice of God is referred to: when a messenger of God calls people to his message, the devils among the jinn and humankind are also given an opportunity to lure them to evil so that those who want to adopt the path of evil can do so. The Prophet (sws) is directed to tell those who are debating with him that how can he follow something else once the Book of God has come to him?

Verses (118-123): The believers are told that they must beware of those who want to lead them astray. They must not follow their religious innovations as per which they have regarded allowed edibles to be forbidden because of their polytheistic beliefs. They can freely consume things which were neither forbidden in the religion of Abraham (sws) nor has the Qur'ān proscribed them. Now that the Almighty has brought them into light from darkness, the Prophet (sws) should disregard the religious innovations and frivolous arguments of those who are stumbling in the darkness of disbelief and polytheism.

Verses (124-127): Arrogant elements are refuted who say that they will not believe in the Qur'ān unless they too receive divine revelation as received by the Prophet (sws). It is stated that not everyone is worthy of being given the high status of prophethood. Only God knows who is worthy of it. Those who arrogantly think that only they deserve success in this world and in the next will be punished for their arrogance. Acceptance of faith is dependent on God's urge and grace and this urge is governed by a specific law.

Verses (128-135): In the hereafter, the deviant among jinnkind and humankind will acknowledge that they reached this fate because of their misdoings even after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them. The Quraysh are warned that they still have time to mend their ways otherwise the promised punishment is bound to visit them and none will be able to protect himself from it.

Verses (136-144): A certain practice of the Idolaters is refuted: they would forbid certain crops and animals to themselves and would sacrifice human beings to please their idols. They are told that these practices originate from baseless superstitions.

They have no basis in human nature and intellect as well as in the religion of Abraham (sws).

Verses (145-154): The things forbidden in the religion of Abraham (sws) and the religion of Moses (sws) are referred to. The notion of the idolaters is refuted that the path they are following is the one God has made them to follow and if God does not like this path why does He not make them tread the true path.

Verses (155-165): The conclusive communication of the truth done through the Qur'ān is stated. Even after this, if the disbelievers await a sign, then they should keep waiting. A prophet does not have the authority to show such a sign. It is proclaimed by the Prophet (sws) that he has been guided by God through Abraham's religion and that he has started to follow it. Now anyone who desires should tread this straight path and anyone who wants can wander about. Everyone is responsible before God for his deeds.

سُوْرَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ

Section 1: Verses (1-11)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَ جَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ وَ النُّوْرَ ؕ ثُمَّ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ یَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ
خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ طِیْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰۤی اَجَلًا ؕ وَ اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی عِنْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ وَ هُوَ اللّٰهُ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ یَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَ
جَهْرَكُمْ وَ یَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَ مَا تَاْتِیْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰیَةٍ مِّنْ اٰیٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِیْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا
جَآءَهُمْ ؕ فَسَوْفَ یَاْتِیْهِمْ اَنْۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ یَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ اَلَمْ یَرَوْا كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ مَا
لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّكُمْ وَ اَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ عَلَیْهِمْ مِّدْرَارًا ۪ وَّ جَعَلْنَا الْاَنْهٰرَ تَجْرِیْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ
بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِیْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَ لَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَیْكَ كِتٰبًا فِیْ قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوْهُ بِاَیْدِیْهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ
﴿٧﴾ وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ لَاۤ اُنْزِلَ عَلَیْهِ مَلَكٌ ؕ وَ لَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِیَ الْاَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا یُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَ لَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنٰهُ رَجُلًا وَّ
لَلَبَسْنَا عَلَیْهِمْ مَّا یَلْبِسُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَ لَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِیْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ
یَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِیْرُوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ انْظُرُوْا كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِیْنَ ﴿١١﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Gratitude is for God alone, Who made the heavens and the earth, created light and expansive darkness. Then it is strange that the disbelievers set up partners with their Lord! It is He Who has created you from clay, then decreed a term and the decreed term is only in His knowledge with Him. It is then strange that you engage in quibbling. And that very God is in the heavens and in the earth also. He has knowledge of what you conceal and what you reveal and also knows what you earn. And whatever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them, they ignore it. Thus, they have denied the evident truth when it has come to them. So, soon the news of what they have been making fun of will come to them. Have they not seen how many a nation we have destroyed before them whom We granted such authority in the land which We have not granted you and We sent down abundant rain on them and made canals flow below them. Then, because of their sins, We at last destroyed them and after them raised up other nations. (1-6)

And if We had revealed to you a Book that was written on paper and they were also able to touch it with their own hands, even then these disbelievers would have still said: "This is but plain magic." And they say: "Why does not an angel openly descend on him?" And if We had sent down an angel, the matter would have been decided. Then they would not have been given any respite. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. So, We would have inflicted them with the very ambiguity they are now in. And before you also messengers were made fun of; so the people among them who had made fun were surrounded by what they would make fun of. Say: Just roam about in the land and see the fate of those who disbelieved. (7-11)

Explanation

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰہِ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ جَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ وَ النُّوۡرَ ۬ؕ ثُمَّ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا بِرَبِّہِمۡ یَعۡدِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱﴾[1]

Research on the word اَلۡحَمۡدُ was presented in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah. It has been stated at a number of times in this *sūrah* that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth as well of darkness and light. The Qur'ān has here put forth an argument in favour of monotheism on the basis of this acknowledgement made by them. It is said that when they accept all this, when how strange it is that they set up partners with God. One aspect of expressing wonder at polytheism is that when everything has been created by God, from where has the possibility of polytheism arisen? Another aspect is that in the apparent conflict found in the opposing elements of nature, to fulfil a higher objective there exists tremendous harmony between them as well. This can be seen for example in the sky and the earth, light and darkness, cold and heat. Such is this harmony between these opposing elements that no sane person can think that they can have separate creators. In fact, every person of insight is compelled to accept that this Universe is working on the basis of a single aim and intent.

ہُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ مِّنۡ طِیۡنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰۤی اَجَلًا ؕ وَ اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی عِنۡدَہٗ ثُمَّ اَنۡتُمۡ تَمۡتَرُوۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ وَ ہُوَ اللّٰہُ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ
یَعۡلَمُ سِرَّکُمۡ وَ جَہۡرَکُمۡ وَ یَعۡلَمُ مَا تَکۡسِبُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾[2]

The fact that human beings are made from clay is alluded to at a number of occasions in the Qur'ān. For examples, in verse 7 of Sūrah al-Sajdah, it is said: وَبَدَاَ خَلۡقَ

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[1] Gratitude is for God alone, Who made the heavens and the earth, created light and expansive darkness. Then it is strange that the disbelievers set up partners with their Lord!

[2] It is He Who has created you from clay, then decreed a term and the decreed term is only in His knowledge with Him. It is then strange that you engage in quibbling. And that very God is in the heavens and in the earth also. He has knowledge of what you conceal and what you reveal and also knows what you earn.

الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِيْنٍ.[3] The purpose is to allude to two realities. First, at the trivial substance of creation of human beings. Thus, they should not become arrogant. Second, at re-creation after death. In other words, when human beings have been created by God from clay and He was faced with no difficulty in creating them, why would it be difficult for Him to re-create them? In the verse under discussion, the purpose is to allude to the latter reality. In verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ra‘d, it is stated: وَاِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَاِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا ءَاِنَّا لَفِيْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ.[4] In verse 104 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā’, the words are: كَمَا بَدَاْنَاۤ اَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيْدُهٗ ؕ وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ.[5] Verse 27 of Sūrah al-Rūm says: وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ.[6]

The word أجل means “period” and the term أجل مسمى is used in the Qur’ān with reference to individuals and nations in different meanings. First, to the time of life which everyone gets from God. Second, to the Day of Judgement whose time of arrival has been prescribed by God. Third, to the time of existence of a nation after which it is wiped out. As an example of the first meaning, the verse under discussion and verse 60 ahead can be cited. As an example of the second meaning, the current verse can again be referred to. The word أجل is used twice. The first instance refers to the time of life of every individual, while the second instance (qualified by the word مسمى (prescribed)) refers to the prescribed time after which human beings will be resurrected. As an example of the third meaning, verse 34 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf can be alluded to: وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ.[7] The time granted to a nation is not like the one granted to individuals. In the latter case, the rule is that whether a person as good or bad, his life will end when his time expires. On the other hand, the life of a nation is governed by moral laws: as long as a nation preserves its faith and character, God will allow it to exist until that time arrives which the Almighty has prescribed for the whole universe. The consequence of this period being governed by moral laws is also that it may be at the verge of destruction because of its misconduct and misdeeds but just before this decadence reaches the time when it must be destroyed, it repents and mends is affairs; then as a result it will be given more time. I will discuss this issue in more detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūḥ.

The word إمتراء is from مراء and means “to squeeze” and “to press.” The expression إمترى اللبن means “he squeezed out milk from the udders.” Here it refers to quibbling and polemical arguments given by a debater to create doubt in something which is

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3. He began creating man with clay.

4. Now if you express wonder, then what is worthy of wonder is their statement: “When we become clay, will we be raised to life again?”

5. The way We began the first creation, in the same way, We shall do it again. This is a definite promise that We are responsible for. Indeed, We are certain to do it.

6. It is He who initiates creation, and it is He who will recreate and this is easier for Him.

7. And a time has been appointed for each nation. Then once their time ends, even for a moment they can neither be pushed back nor moved forward.

beyond doubt.

The verse means that it is God Who has created human beings from clay and this is such a reality which the Quraysh too do not deny. After that he prescribed a time of life for everyone. It is not that people become immortal. What is the doubt in God re-creating them when He has created them from clay the first time?. He has fixed a time for this and only He has knowledge of this time. This is a certain reality in which there is no possibility of any debate or discussion. However, the Quraysh are adamant on their quibbling.

It is further implied that the heavens and he earth do not have separate gods. He is the master of both and each is under His command. In verse 84 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is stated: وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ فِي السَّمَآءِ اِلٰهٌ وَّ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ.[8] The creation and sustained existence of the heavens and the earth bears witness that both are governed by the intent of the same God. Had this not been the case, both would have been destroyed as is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān (21:22). This verse actually refutes a certain opinion of the Idolaters. They did acknowledge that God has created both heavens and the earth; however, they contended that since the earth is a far flung area of His kingdom, He has consigned its governance to His workers. The verse asserts that both the heavens and the earth are under God's direct control. Such is His knowledge that He knows the intentions, words and deeds of people. Thus He does not need any helper in His kingdom.

This topic of monotheism lays further emphasis on the topic of hereafter discussed earlier. It has been repeatedly explained in the Qur'ān that it is essential to believe in the hereafter because without this belief, this world is rendered into a place of amusement. The same is the consequence that can be drawn if the baseless belief of intercession is accepted along with belief in the hereafter. This is because if the partners of God will be able to have all their worshippers – whatever deeds they committed – forgiven from God, as was claimed by the Idolaters, then the hereafter has no significance.

وَ مَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ۝٤ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ؕ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِيْهِمْ اَنْۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝٥[9]

The word "truth" here refers to the Qur'ān. They were making fun of it because it was warning them of a punishment if they rejected the messenger.

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[8] And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One,

[9] And whatever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them, they ignore it. Thus, they have denied the evident truth when it has come to them. So, soon the news of what they have been making fun of will come to them.

اَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّكُمْ وَاَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّدْرَارًا وَّجَعَلْنَا
الْاَنْهٰرَ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَاَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾[10]

Historical evidence is cited here on the claim made earlier. No nation was spared from the punishment of denying a messenger and the Quraysh too must realize this. Here history has been referred to briefly. Details will be found in Sūrah al-A‘rāf the next *sūrah*, which forms its counterpart.

The word سماء is also means “clouds” just as it means “sky.” The word مِّدْرَارًا carries exaggeration and emphasis in it and signifies abundant rain and copious sustenance. It has been used thus in verse 52 of Sūrah Hūd and verse 11 of Sūrah Nūḥ.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتٰبًا فِيْ قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوْهُ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنٰهُ رَجُلًا وَّلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا
يَلْبِسُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾[11]

Earlier in verse 4, the aversion of the Quraysh towards the Qur’ān was mentioned. Here their objections and demands are responded to which they presented as an excuse to this aversion. The purpose is to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) that he should not think that they really have a legitimate excuse for their aversion so that if it is taken care of they would accept the Qur’ān. The fact is that nothing will change. They will find new excuses because the reason of their not accepting it is that it is against their desires and not any lack of miracles shown to them.

The first verse is actually an answer to the demand of the People of the Book cited in their own words in verse 154 of Sūrah al-Nisā’. There the answer given was the one that was apt for the People of the Book.

The second verse mentions their second demand and its answer. This demand is also

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[10] Have they not seen how many a nation we have destroyed before them whom We granted such authority in the land which We have not granted you and We sent down abundant rain on them and made canals flow below them. Then, because of their sins, We at last destroyed them and after them raised up other nations..

[11] And if We had revealed to you a Book that was written on paper and they were also able to touch it with their own hands, even then these disbelievers would have still said: “This is but plain magic.” And they say: “Why does not an angel openly descend on him?” And if We had sent down an angel, the matter would have been decided. Then they would not have been given any respite. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. So, We would have inflicted them with the very ambiguity they are now in.

cited at other instances in the Qur’ān. The answer alludes to God’s established practice referred to in many verses that only that faith is acceptable which is professed through intellectually acknowledging corroborating signs found within and around human beings and in their nature and intellect without actually observing God.

The third verse answers a third demand. This too is cited at other instances. Thus, for example in verse 94 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl it is said: وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنۡ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡۤا اِذۡ جَآءَهُمُ الۡهُدٰۤی اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ قَالُوۡۤا اَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُوۡلًا.[12] Similarly, verse 6 of Sūrah al-Taghābun, it is said: فَقَالُوۡۤا اَبَشَرٌ یَّهۡدُوۡنَنَا ۫ فَکَفَرُوۡا وَ تَوَلَّوۡا وَّ اسۡتَغۡنَی اللّٰهُ.[13] The implication is that if the reason for not sending an angel is not because it was impossible for God but because human beings can only see angels when they are in the form of human beings. So if they had come in the form of a human being, they would have again raised the same question.

It is evident from the words “inflicted with the very ambiguity they are now in” that the doubt they raised for was not real. They were actually fabricating a doubt in order to create ambiguity for their simple-minded masses. The act of making it ambiguous is ascribed to the Almighty. This is in accordance with His established practice[14] that He confounds people when they themselves wish to confound themselves.

وَ لَقَدِ اسۡتُهۡزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِکَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِیۡنَ سَخِرُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ مَّا کَانُوۡا بِهٖ یَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قُلۡ سِیۡرُوۡا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ثُمَّ
انۡظُرُوۡا کَیۡفَ کَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الۡمُکَذِّبِیۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[15]

The verb حاق means “to surround” and “to overspread.”

In verse 5, the Quraysh were threatened and told that they were making fun of an indisputable reality whose signs they will soon observe. Now in these verses the evidence and signs of this indisputable reality are referred to.

If they reflect on the history of their own land of Arabia, they will find many signs of the nations who were destroyed because of denying their respective messengers. Here this brief hint is only given, In the next *sūrah*, they are referred to in detail. It will become evident from them that the nations of ‘Ād, Thamūd, Madyan and Lot (sws) etc made fun of their own messengers and regarded the doom promised to them by these messengers to be a bluff. Ultimately, they were doomed and routed.

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[12] And when guidance came to them, the only thing that stopped these people from accepting faith was that they said: “Has God sent a human being as a messenger?”

[13] So, they said to them: “Will mortals guide us?” Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them.

[14] So, they said to them: “Will mortals guide us?” Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them.

[15] And before you also messengers were made fun of; so the people among them who had made fun were surrounded by what they would make fun of. Say: Just roam about in the land and see the fate of those who disbelieved.

Section II: Verses (12-32)

In the forthcoming verses, arguments in favour of monotheism, hereafter and prophethood are presented in some new styles with some new aspects.

Text and Translation

قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ؕ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَلَّذِيْنَ
خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۱۳﴾ قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا
فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِّيْۤ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ قُلْ اِنِّيْۤ
اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ مَنْ يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ
اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ
الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿۱۸﴾ قُلْ اَيُّ شَيْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ شَهِيْدٌۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۙ وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ ؕ
اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰى ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّاِنَّنِيْ بَرِيْۤءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ
اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۘ اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى
اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْۤا اَيْنَ شُرَكَآؤُكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ
كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ قَالُوْا وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ
عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْۤ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا
كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءُوْكَ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَ
يَنْئَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّهْلِكُوْنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰۤى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوْا يٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ
رَبِّنَا وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُخْفُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَوْ رُدُّوْا لَعَادُوْا لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَ
قَالُوْۤا اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰۤى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَ
رَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوْا
يٰحَسْرَتَنَا عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيْهَا ۙ وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ؕ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَاۤ اِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَّ

لَهْوٌ ؕ وَلَلدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Ask them: To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God alone. He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. After gathering all of you, He shall definitely take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. Only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it. And whatever is stationed in the night or moves in the day is under His control alone. And He hears all and knows all. (12-13)

Say: Should I make anyone else but God my guardian Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? And He gives nourishment and is not nourished? Say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists. Say: If I disobey the directive of my Lord, I fear the torment of a horrific day. He who is spared that day from it is in fact the one God has shown mercy to, and this is clear success. (14-16)

And if God afflicts you with some sorrow, none except Him can take it away, and if He blesses you with some good fortune, then He has power over all things. And He is dominant on His servants in every respect and is Wise, All-Knowing. Ask: Who is the greatest witness? Say: God. He is a witness between you and me. And this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and those also whom it reaches. Do you bear witness to this that there are some other deities also besides God? Say: I do not bear witness to this. Say: He is but one God and I disown those you associate with Him. (17-19)

Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it the way they recognize their own sons. Those who have put themselves in loss, it is they who do not believe in it and who can be more unjust than the one who imputed a falsehood to God or denied His revelations? Indeed, such unjust can never succeed. Remember the day when We shall gather all of them. Then We shall ask these Idolaters: “Where are your associates who you thought were Our partners?” Then their deception will be exposed; but they will say: “By God, our Lord! We were never idolaters.” See how they have lied about themselves and all what they had been fabricating has vanished away. (20-24)

And there are those among them also who listen to you intently but We have cast veils over their hearts so that they may not understand what is said and have made their ears deaf so that they are not able to hear it. And if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them. So much so, when they will come to argue with you, these disbelievers will say: “These are only tales of the ancients.” And they also stop others from it and ignore it themselves as well, and in reality they ruin none but themselves, but are not aware of this. And if you could see the time when they would be made to stand beside Hell, then they will say: “Would that we are sent back so that we can testify and not deny the revelations of our Lord and become believers.” In fact, the reality which they had concealed in their hearts before has manifested itself to them. And if they are sent back, they will do the same which they had been forbidden. They are absolute liars. (25-28)

They say: "There is no other life but this worldly life of ours and we shall not be raised to life after death." And if you could see the time when they will be made to stand before their Lord! He will ask them: "Is this not a reality?" "Yes, by our Lord! It is a reality," they will reply. He will say: "So, taste the punishment because of your disbelief!" They incurred loss who denied their meeting with God. Until when that hour suddenly arrives, they will say: "Pitiful is our negligence in this regard," and they would be bearing their burden on their backs. Know well! Very evil is the burden they will be bearing. And the life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. The abode of the Hereafter, however, is better for those who are pious. Then do you not understand? (29-32)

Explanation

قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ ۭ كَتَبَ عَلٰي نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۭ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰي يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۭ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾[16]

There are several instances in the Qur'ān in which a question is posed to the addressees and then without waiting for their reply, it is answered. Deliberation shows that on such instances the addressees are no position to deny it. If any of their beliefs of deeds is against it, it is against what they themselves fully acknowledge. The haste in expressing the answer also shows that the truth must be told regardless of the stubbornness the addressees may show in response. Here it should be kept in mind that in spite of subscribing to idolatry, the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth, as has been explained elsewhere.

The words "He has made mercy mandatory on Himself" signify the level of perfection in God's mercy and also that whatever this attribute requires shall certainly come into being. Nothing can stop it.

In لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰي يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ, the preposition اِلٰي evidences the existence of a word that means "driving someone."

In other words, the advent of the Day of Judgement is a necessary consequence of God's attribute of mercy. The absence of such a day would mean that the creator of this universe is neither Most Gracious nor Ever-Merciful. It would mean that, God forbid, to Him justice and injustice, virtue and vice, good and evil occupy equal status. The world is a place of entertainment and unrestrained actions that will never be checked. Since all this is obviously baseless and it is absolutely against the Gracious and Merciful God to do something without purpose, it is essential that He bring about a day in which His mercy fully manifests itself, the pious are unboundedly blessed by Him and the wicked meet their fate. It logically follows from this that the real purpose of the Day of Judgement is not to punish the wrongdoers; it is, in fact, to reward the righteous. Punishing the wrongdoers is in reality an essential consequence of rewarding the righteous. This aspect will be explained further under verse 53.

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[16]. Ask them: To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God alone. He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. After gathering all of you, He shall definitely take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. Only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it. And whatever is stationed in the night or moves in the day is under His control alone. And He hears all and knows all.

The sentence "only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it" has been elucidated by verse 31 ahead.

According to linguistic principles, in وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ, a contrasting word such as ما تحرك (that moves) to سَكَنَ (that is stationed) is suppressed. It has been revealed in the translation. More examples of this common stylistic feature of the Qur'ān are coming up.

These verses mean that if these people are conceitedly denying the hereafter and its reward and punishment because of their worldly successes and also making fun of the Prophet (sws), then he should ask them about the ownership of these heavens and the earth. The obvious answer of this is that they belong to God and these people too do not deny this. He should then tell them that God has made mercy mandatory on Himself. The essential consequence of this is that after creating them and providing them with all means of sustenance they not be left without any purpose. It is essential that He take them to the Day of Judgement regardless of their will. There is no doubt in the advent of this day. When it will come, people who show arrogance today and make fun of it are engrossed in worldly pleasures will utterly regret their attitude. They would express sorrow that they had forgotten the hereafter because of the transient pleasures of this life and now face eternal loss.

After that an example of God's all embracing knowledge is cited that shows that the darkness of night and the radiance of the day are equal with regard to His knowledge of what happens in them. He will gather everyone from all places and just as He is all powerful, He is all knowledgeable too. Verses 59-62 ahead discuss this topic in detail.

قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ هُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَ لَا يُطْعَمُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِّيْۤ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَ لَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ قُلْ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ مَنْ يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۱۶﴾[17]

These verses state the second essential consequence of the reality mentioned earlier:

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[17] . Say: Should I make anyone else but God my guardian Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? And He gives nourishment and is not nourished? Say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists. Say: If I disobey the directive of my Lord, I fear the torment of a horrific day. He who is spared that day from it is in fact the one God has shown mercy to, and this is clear success.

when to God belongs everything and the heavens and the earth have been created by Him, it is not befitting for the Prophet (sws) to regard anyone else as his guardian and protector however much these people may not want to.

The sentence “and He gives nourishment and is not nourished” is a reference to God’s providence, and also encompasses a subtle sarcasm for the Idolaters. The implication is that only He is worthy of being regarded as the guardian and protector of people Who brings the heavens and the earth into existence from nothingness and with Whose grace everyone is being given sustenance. It is not their idolaters who can do all this. They themselves accept that they have not created anything. As for being deities, suffice it to say to expose them that when they present sweet edibles to them, they are happy at receiving them. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the edibles the Idolaters presented to their deities would be regarded by them as their favourite food which they would eat and whose aroma they would relish. On the contrary, whatever a person who only believes in God offers to God returns to His poor creatures and none of it, as specified by the Qur’ān, comes in the use of God.

Evident from the style in “say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists” is that a prophet is the first person to comply with the guidance he gives others on God’s behalf. Further evident from it is that it does not make a difference to him whether people who he invited to accepted his invitation or not.

The sentence “you should never become among the polytheists” is not connected to “I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam.” It is an independent statement that the Prophet (sws) must convey to them. Though these words are addressed to him, however, the rebuke in them is directed to the people whose attitude is under discussion.

The last verse subtly insinuates that those who regard worldly success to be the real thing and forget the real success of the hereafter will realize their wretchedness when that day comes.

وَإِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗٓ إِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَإِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ
الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾[18]

Though the address of the first of the above verses is in the singular, it signifies a general situation and is actually a further explanation of what is said previously.

The word الْقَاهِرُ means “the supreme controller.” All the universe and all people are under His control and jurisdiction and he is not dependent on anyone to control them.

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[18] And if God afflicts you with some sorrow, none except Him can take it away, and if He blesses you with some good fortune, then He has power over all things. And He is dominant on His servants in every respect and is Wise, All-Knowing.

There is absolutely no chance that anyone can escape His grasp when He will seize them. In verse 61 ahead, this topic is further explained.

That God is wise and aware necessitates many things. For example, He brings about a Day of Judgement because without it, this world becomes a purposeless place. Secondly, there is no possibility of any intercession that may turn good into evil and vice versa because this is not only against His wisdom but also His knowledge.

قُلۡ اَیُّ شَیۡءٍ اَکۡبَرُ شَهَادَةً ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۟ شَهِیۡدٌۢ بَیۡنِیۡ وَ بَیۡنَکُمۡ ۟ وَ اُوۡحِیَ اِلَیَّ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنُ لِاُنۡذِرَکُمۡ بِهٖ وَ مَنۡۢ بَلَغَ ؕ اَئِنَّکُمۡ
لَتَشۡهَدُوۡنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخۡرٰی ؕ قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَشۡهَدُ ۚ قُلۡ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّ اِنَّنِیۡ بَرِیۡٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشۡرِکُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[19]

Most exegetes regard the expression مَنۡۢ بَلَغَ to be coordinated to the accusative pronoun in لِاُنۡذِرَکُمۡ. Thus according to this construction, the translation would be: “and this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that through it I may warn you and those also to whom it reaches.” However, I think this expression is coordinated to the nominative pronoun in لِاُنۡذِرَکُمۡ. Thus, the meaning would be: “and this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that through it I may warn you and those also whom it reaches also warn others.” This is a reminder of the responsibility mentioned in verse 123 of Sūrah al-Tawbah thus: فَلَوۡ لَا نَفَرَ مِنۡ کُلِّ فِرۡقَةٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّیَتَفَقَّهُوۡا فِی الدِّیۡنِ وَ لِیُنۡذِرُوۡا قَوۡمَهُمۡ اِذَا رَجَعُوۡۤا اِلَیۡهِمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ یَحۡذَرُوۡنَ.[20] This responsibility is also mentioned in narratives. Hence, for example, فَلۡیُبَلِّغۡ الشَّاهِدُ الۡغَائِبَ[21] (let those present communicate this to those no present). The responsibility of this *ummah* stated in verse 143 of Sūrah al-Baqarah also corroborates this: وَکَذٰلِکَ جَعَلۡنٰکُمۡ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَکُوۡنُوۡا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَی النَّاسِ وَ یَکُوۡنَ الرَّسُوۡلُ عَلَیۡکُمۡ شَهِیۡدًا (and similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you be witnesses [to the truth] before the people, and the *rasūl* be such a witness before you).

The meaning of the verse is the decisive evidence of whether God has a partner or not is that of God Himself. Only He can tell who He has included in His sovereignty and what is their nature. In other words, if He has done no such thing, on what authority can the Quraysh do so. It is then further said through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he regards God’s witness as final in this matter: He has revealed this Qur’ān to him for this very evidence that he warns them through it that God has no partners and they also to whom it reaches warn others that God has no peers. Now

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[19] Ask: Who is the greatest witness? Say: God. He is a witness between you and me. And this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and those also whom it reaches. Do you bear witness to this that there are some other deities also besides God? Say: I do not bear witness to this. Say: He is but one God and I disown those you associate with Him.

[20] But why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

[21] See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 619, (no. 1652).

if even after this, they think that God has partners, then the Prophet (sws) is not prepared to bear this false witness. He has been directed to proclaim that God is one and only and that he has acquitted himself from those they associate with God.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ يَعۡرِفُوۡنَهٗ كَمَا يَعۡرِفُوۡنَ اَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ ۘ اَلَّذِيۡنَ خَسِرُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَمَنۡ اَظۡلَمُ مِمَّنِ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوۡ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفۡلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[22]

The first part of verse 20 has been discussed in detail under verse 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It was explained there that the righteous among the People of the Book are referred to here. In the Qur’ān, the righteous among the People of the Book are generally mentioned in the active voice. The accusative pronoun in يَعۡرِفُوۡنَهٗ (they recognize it) is the Qur’ān that has been mentioned in verse 19. Some people regard this pronoun to refer to the Prophet (sws). However, since this verse actually addresses him, an indirect pronoun is not appropriate for him. Nevertheless, as far as the purport of the verse is concerned, not much difference results. This is because the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws) mutually necessitate one another. Such is this mutual necessity that in verses 10-11 of Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, the two are mentioned as substitutes of one another.

The simile of “their sons” has also been explained earlier. Just as an estranged father waits for the promised meeting with his son – and from afar his arrival becomes known to him – in a similar way the righteous among the People of the Book were waiting or the Qur’ān and Muhammad (sws). Their emotions are depicted in verse 53 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah thus: وَاِذَا سَمِعُوۡا مَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ تَرٰۤى اَعۡيُنَهُمۡ تَفِيۡضُ مِنَ الدَّمۡعِ (and when they hear what is revealed to the Messenger, you see that their eyes overflow up with tears.)

In order to further reinforce the evidence borne by the Qur’ān, the verses under discussion state this not evidence is not unknown. It is well-known and is mentioned in the previous scriptures. Those who were given the Book before the Prophet (sws) and those of faith among them were ardently waiting for it. Only they will deprive themselves of believing in it who have put themselves in loss. When this is God’s evidence, then who can be more unjust than the one who imputes falsehood to God against this evidence.

Though this *sūrah* is a Makkan one, it belongs to that Makkan phase in which the People of the Book in Madīnah had been impacted by it. As a result, the miscreants among them were fuelling its adversity and the righteous among them were regarding it to be an affirmation of the prophecies found in their scriptures. For this reason, this insinuation of the Qur'ān is very meaningful. It encouraged in the pious and at the same time warned those who were deliberately posing as ignorant. More details of this topic will be found in verse 114 ahead.

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[22]. Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it the way they recognize their own sons. Those who have put themselves in loss, it is they who do not believe in it and who can be more unjust than the one who imputed a falsehood to God or denied His revelations? Indeed, such unjust can never succeed.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَيْنَ شُرَكَاؤُكُمُ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُن فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا وَ
اللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ انظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾[23]

The emphasis in the word جَمِيعًا (all) in وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا has embraced all the groups mentioned earlier whether they were the ones who ascribed partners to God or denied the Day of Judgement or rejected the revelations of God. Though all of these were Idolaters, it is evident from the Qur'ān that each had different reasons to some extent for their rejection. For this reason, they are mentioned separately in the verses ahead and each of them has been warned in accordance with its wrongdoings.

If the meaning of the word فِتْنَةٌ in the expression فِتْنَتُهُمْ, is taken to be in the same sense as the Qur'ān calls wealth and children and the trivial pleasures of this life to be فِتْنَةٌ, then it will be considered to be annexed to its *maf'ūl*. The expression ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُن فِتْنَتُهُمْ would mean that the trial of polytheism and false desires they are inflicted with now will become evident to them and they will see that the supports they were living on were mere deception. At that instant, they will have no option but to impute falsehood to their own selves the way they did to God.

On the other hand, if this word is taken to mean persecution, it will be annexed to its *fā'il*. The expression ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُن فِتْنَتُهُمْ would then mean that the way they are persecuting weak Muslims because they had denied polytheism will end and they themselves would be struck with those very calamities they had inflicted the Muslims with. As soon as they will be seized by God, they will lie acquit themselves of polytheism and lie. Whichever of these two interpretations is taken, in both cases the sarcasm would be steeped in the style of the verse and the exception would be regarded as severed. I am more inclined to the first of these interpretations and have translated the verse accordingly.

The imperative verb "see" is to portray the situation so that a future event comes to mind. These people will bear false witness against themselves. At the very beginning of the Day of Judgement, they will deny the polytheism for which they fought all their lives in the previous world. Also found in this the sarcasm is that in this world they bore false witness against God, as is mentioned in verse 19 and in the hereafter they

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[23]. Remember the day when We shall gather all of them. Then We shall ask these Idolaters: "Where are your associates who you thought were Our partners?" Then their deception will be exposed; but they will say: "By God, our Lord! We were never idolaters." See how they have lied about themselves and all what they had been fabricating has vanished away.

will bear false witness against their own selves.

The exact meaning of the expression ضَلَّ عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا کَانُوۡا یَفۡتَرُوۡنَ would be that no benefit could their intercessors and associates give them in the hereafter. They were given this position of intercession by imputing falsehood to God.

This explanation of the components of the verse elucidates its meaning. No further details are needed. However, it is possible that one question may arise in the minds of people: it is evident from some instances in the Qur’ān that on the Day of Judgement the Idolaters will confess to polytheism and even call their deities for help, while, on the other hand, in the verses under discussion they will deny it on oath. The answer to this question is that these two statements are given at two different occasions. At first they will call their deities and later when they will see that no headway is being made, they will deny that they even subscribed to polytheism.

وَ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ یَّسۡتَمِعُ اِلَیۡكَ ۚ وَ جَعَلۡنَا عَلٰی قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ اَکِنَّةً اَنۡ یَّفۡقَهُوۡهُ وَ فِیۡۤ اٰذَانِهِمۡ وَقۡرًا ؕ وَ اِنۡ یَّرَوۡا کُلَّ اٰیَةٍ لَّا یُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِهَا ؕ
حَتّٰۤی اِذَا جَآءُوۡكَ یُجَادِلُوۡنَكَ یَقُوۡلُ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡۤا اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِیۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَ هُمۡ یَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنۡهُ وَ یَنۡـَٔوۡنَ عَنۡهُ ۚ وَ اِنۡ
یُّهۡلِکُوۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ وَ مَا یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَ لَوۡ تَرٰۤی اِذۡ وُقِفُوۡا عَلَی النَّارِ فَقَالُوۡا یٰلَیۡتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَ لَا نُکَذِّبَ بِاٰیٰتِ رَبِّنَا وَ نَکُوۡنَ
مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ بَلۡ بَدَا لَهُمۡ مَّا کَانُوۡا یُخۡفُوۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ وَ لَوۡ رُدُّوۡا لَعَادُوۡا لِمَا نُهُوۡا عَنۡهُ وَ اِنَّهُمۡ لَکٰذِبُوۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾[24]

The word اَکِنَّةً is the plural of کن and کنان and means “a cork” or “ a cover.”

The word وَقۡر means “burden.” Here it refers to hardness of ears. The cover and hardness mentioned here are obviously metaphorical that stops and the heart and the ears to listen and understand. These faculties are the real essence of a human being. After being deprived of these faculties, a person becomes an animal; in fact, even worse. This situation arises because of a person’s own misdeeds and is governed by a principle: when a person does not use these faculties for the purpose they are given, he is deprived of them as a punishment. This is God’s established practice.

A verb that is appropriate in meaning to اَنۡ یَّفۡقَهُوۡهُ collocating with اٰذَانِ is suppressed.

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[24] And there are those among them also who listen to you intently but We have cast veils over their hearts so that they may not understand what is said and have made their ears deaf so that they are not able to hear it. And if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them. So much so, when they will come to argue with you, these disbelievers will say: “These are only tales of the ancients.” And they also stop others from it and ignore it themselves as well, and in reality they ruin none but themselves, but are not aware of this. And if you could see the time when they would be made to stand beside Hell, then they will say: “Would that we are sent back so that we can testify and not deny the revelations of our Lord and become believers.” In fact, the reality which they had concealed in their hearts before has manifested itself to them. And if they are sent back, they will do the same which they had been forbidden. They are absolute liars.

The translation points to it.

The words “and if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them” are no exaggeration. The implication is that if they do not accept faith, it is not because any signs and miracles did not manifest themselves to them. After all, what is this whole universe, the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the seas, the mountains, the clouds, the wind, the night and day? Are they not signs and miracles? The whole universe is replete with such signs but what is the cure for people who do not have eyes that can really see? They are blind to all such signs and miracles. And if some other miracles are shown to them, they will make some excuse and remain obstinate in their ways. The remedy to this is they untie the covers on their eyes and intently listen to the Prophet’s message and the call of the Qur’ān. If they are not prepared to do this, what benefit can miracles give them?

The word اَسَاطِيۡر is the plural of أسطورة and أسطيرة. It means “an unfounded story.”

The reason that the Qur’ān has cited the history of some nations while presenting its message is that the Arabs draw a message from it. This history shows that the rise and fall of nations are not accidental events. They are governed by moral principles. When a nation becomes bereft of morals, it is destroyed by God’s law and some other nation replaces it which is better in conduct and character. This nation is now made to pass through the same test. The Almighty sees how it behaves after being given sovereignty. If it also deviates, it is destroyed too and replaced by another one. By regarding this principle of rise and fall of nations as a foundational one, the Qur’an has presented before the Arabs their own past history. In other words, the destruction of the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nations of Sabā’, Lot (sws) and the Pharaoh were not accidental events. They were governed by the divine principle of rise and fall of nations. When these nations were afflicted with moral and spiritual ailments, the Almighty sent spiritual healers to cure them. These prophets of God tried their best to heal them but these nations paid no heed to them. As a consequence, they were annihilated by God. By narrating this history, the Qur’ān has warned the Arabs that they too face a similar situation of life and death. A messenger of God has arrived among them. If they do not listen to him, they too will be annihilated the way their predecessors were. This warning of the Qur’ān struck a hefty blow on the arrogance of the Arabs. In the first place, they never liked being diagnosed as a morally sick nation that entailed punishment. In the second place, they never believed that the rise and fall of nations was governed by moral principles. They believed that nations live and die just as human beings or objects of nature like trees do. Just as living beings pass through the phases of infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age, nations too do so in a similar way. This has nothing to do with moral principles. At one instance, the Qur’ān (45:24) has cited their view: وَمَا يُهۡلِكُنَاۤ اِلَّا الدَّهۡرُ (only fortune kills us). Obviously if this was their view, it was but natural for them to show anger at the view expressed by the Qur’ān. In fact, their rage escalated when they observed that people were being influenced by the Qur’ān. These people feared that if they did not listen to the Prophet (sws) and to the Qur’ān they will be punished. It was in this confused state they would say that this Qur’ān is a tale of the ancients which are being proclaimed by a madman. More details on this can be looked up under verse 24 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

In فَقَالُوْا يٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَ نُكَذِّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا لَا, a word to the effect نصدق is suppressed in response to the desire found in يٰلَيْتَنَا. The expression وَلَانُكَذِّبَ is actually connected to this suppression. That is why it occurs as a light indefinite tense (*muḍāri‘ khafīf*). In other words, a very obvious answer to the desire was فنصدق (we attest) or a similar one. Hence it was suppressed and this suppression was indicated through the particle of co-ordination in وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ. The eloquence in this expression is very telling: not only does longing exude from it, but their confession is also evident from it. In other words, today these people are showing arrogance and regarding the Qur’ān to be a tale of the ancients; however, on the day of judgement they will long to come back in this world to testify to the revelations of their Lord and not deny them.

After an explanation of the components of the verses, let us look at their meanings.

Earlier in verses 21-24, the fate of the leaders of polytheism was described. In the verses under discussion, the fate of the leaders who have denied the Qur’ān is referred to. It is said that though some miscreants listen to the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān he recites out to them, it is not to accept or understand them; the purpose is to find some point of debate and dispute so that they can indulge in baseless polemics with him. Because of their misdeeds, their hearts and ears have been sealed; so, now they cannot accept the truth. The Prophet (sws) should not think that if they are shown a miracle they will accept it and profess faith in the Qur’ān. The fact is that if they observe all kinds of miracles, even them they will engage in baseless argumentation. This is because as long as the real reason for them to reject the truth remains, they will never listen. They arrogantly regard the Qur’ān to be a tale of the ancients. However, the Prophet (sws) should rest assured that they will neither be able to harm God or him; they are leading only themselves to doom. However, since this doom is impending, they are not realizing it. They will gravely regret what they did when they will be made to stand at the edge of the pit of Hell and would wish to go back in the previous world and profess faith. The Qur’ān says that even this admission on their part is false. If they are made to return, they will do the same as they did before. This is because the reason for their denial is not that they are not aware of the truth. They knew that the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān and reward and punishment are undeniable truths. However, love of the world, arrogance and jealousy had made them blind. If they are now sent in the previous world, they will deny what they are committing here just as they denied when they were there; they will regard this observation to be a horrible dream.

وَ قَالُوْٓا اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَ مَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَ لَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ قَالُوْا

بَلٰى وَ رَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوۡقُوا الۡعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَدۡ خَسِرَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَتۡهُمُ السَّاعَةُ
بَغۡتَةً قَالُوۡا يٰحَسۡرَتَنَا عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطۡنَا فِيۡهَا ۙ وَ هُمۡ يَحۡمِلُوۡنَ اَوۡزَارَهُمۡ عَلٰى ظُهُوۡرِهِمۡ ؕ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُوۡنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَ مَا الۡحَيٰوةُ
الدُّنۡيَاۤ اِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهۡوٌ ؕ وَلَلدَّارُ الۡاٰخِرَةُ خَيۡرٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ يَتَّقُوۡنَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿٣٢﴾[25]

There is no literary or grammatical complexity in these verses.

After the fate of the rejecters of the Qur’ān was stated earlier, these verses depict the fate of the rejecters of the hereafter.

Section II: Verses (33-50)

As can be observed, the previous section of verses ended on assurance to the Prophet (sws). This section dwells further on this topic of assurance. In fact, there occurs an emphatic enhancement in it. This enhancement is very affectionate for the Prophet (sws) and his companions; the rebuke and anger it encapsulates is entirely directed towards the stubborn rejecters. These rejecters persistently demanded a miracle from the Prophet (sws). They said that that after being shown it, they will accept the Qur’ān presented by the Prophet (sws) as God’s Book. It was but natural that the Prophet (sws) and his companions be impacted by this demand. This was especially true for the Prophet (sws) because he was an embodiment of affection and love for his people. Under the influence of this demand, he would wish that a miracle be shown to them so that they may well accept faith. The Almighty has first of all assured him that this demand should not worry him. These people are not denying him; they are actually denying God’s revelations. So when God is observing and hearing everything and in spite of being able to is still not fulfilling their demand, why should he be worried. Prophets who came before him were similarly rejected; they bore this rejection with patience and hence he too should do the same. This is God’s established practice.

After that it is stated in a very severe tone that if God wanted to forcibly make people accept faith, this would have happened in the blink of an eye. However, He did

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[25] They say: “There is no other life but this worldly life of ours and we shall not be raised to life after death.” And if you could see the time when they will be made to stand before their Lord! He will ask them: “Is this not a reality?” “Yes, by our Lord! It is a reality,” they will reply. He will say: “So, taste the punishment because of your disbelief!” They incurred loss who denied their meeting with God. Until when that hour suddenly arrives, they will say: “Pitiful is our negligence in this regard,” and they would be bearing their burden on their backs. Know well! Very evil is the burden they will be bearing. And the life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. The abode of the Hereafter, however, is better for those who are pious. Then do you not understand?

not want this to happen. He wanted people to use their intellect and insight and accept faith on the basis of their own will and intention. So, if this is the case, then why should the Prophet (sws) be overwhelmed with their demand? God does not want this to happen. However, if the Prophet (sws) would like this to happen, he can bring a miracle from wherever he can from the heavens and the earth.

After that, it is stated what type of people will accept faith and what type will continue to ask for miracles. Next, the wisdom of not showing them a miracle is stated: their attention is directed to the numerous miracles that already exist in this universe and to the arguments and proofs which are found in the Book of God. It is said that people who have closed their eyes to these facts are deaf, dumb and blind. Nothing can open their eyes.

After that, it is said that if these people demand a sign of the punishment, then the Prophet (sws) should ask them that if it comes or if the Day of Judgement arrives whether they have any protection against it. At that time, they will only call out on God. Next, the history of the prophets and their nations is alluded to in this connection. These nations were shown similar signs but they did not benefit from them. The result was that they were destroyed. In a similar way, if the Quraysh are seized internally or externally, who except God can save them?

In the end, the responsibility of the prophets of delivering warning and glad tidings is referred to. This responsibility does not include showing miracles or signs of punishment. It is proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he is not the owner of God’s treasures; he also has no knowledge of the unseen nor does he claim to be an angel. He only follows the revelations received by him from God. Everyone is free to accept or reject them. It is nevertheless an undeniable fact that those who can see and those who cannot will not be equal in the eyes of God.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ اِنَّهٗ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِىْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُوْنَكَ وَ لٰكِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَ لَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ
رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوْا عَلٰى مَا كُذِّبُوْا وَ اُوْذُوْا حَتّٰۤى اَتٰهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ لَقَدْ جَآءَكَ مِنْ نَّبَاِى
الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَ اِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ اِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَاِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ اَنْ تَبْتَغِىَ نَفَقًا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَوْ سُلَّمًا فِى السَّمَآءِ فَتَاْتِيَهُمْ
بِاٰيَةٍ ؕ وَ لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ ؕ وَ الْمَوْتٰى
يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰۤى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ
هُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَ مَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَ لَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّاۤ اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ ؕ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ثُمَّ
اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا صُمٌّ وَّ بُكْمٌ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ مَنْ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يُضْلِلْهُ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّشَاْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ

مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۳۹ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَدْعُوْنَ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۴۰ بَلْ اِيَّاهُ
تَدْعُوْنَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اِنْ شَآءَ وَ تَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۴۱ وَ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ
بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَ الضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ۴۲ فَلَوْلَاۤ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوْا وَ لٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ مَا
كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۴۳ فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَاۤ اُوْتُوْۤا اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاِذَا هُمْ
مُّبْلِسُوْنَ ۴۴ فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ؕ وَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۴۵ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَ
اَبْصَارَكُمْ وَ خَتَمَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِكُمْ مَّنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُوْنَ ۴۶ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ
اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۴۷ وَ مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَ مُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ
فَمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَ اَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۴۸ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ
۴۹ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَ لَاۤ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَ لَاۤ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰۤى اِلَيَّ ؕ قُلْ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِي الْاَعْمٰى وَ الْبَصِيْرُ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۵۰

We have been aware that what they say grieves you. So, be patient. It is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God's revelations. And other messengers before you have also been rejected. So, they patiently bore their rejection and their harassment until Our help came to them. None can change the decrees of God, and the anecdotes of the prophets have already reached you. (33-34)

And if their aversion is hard for you to bear, find if you can a tunnel in the earth or a stairway in the sky by which you may bring them a sign. Had God willed, He could have gathered all of them on guidance. So, do not become of those who are overcome by emotions. Only those people shall accept who listen and understand. As for these dead, God will raise them; then they will be returned to Him. (35-36)

And they say: "Why was no sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Tell them: God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know, And all the beasts that roam on their legs on the earth and all the birds that soar on both their wings in the air are all communities like your own. And We have left no stone unturned in Our Book. Then all of them will be gathered before their Lord. And those who have denied Our revelations, these deaf and dumb are engulfed in darkness. God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases. (37-39)

Say: What if God's punishment visits you or the Hour of Doom arrives, will you call anyone except God if you are truthful in your claim? In fact, you call Him alone. Then, if He pleases, He relieves the affliction for which you called Him and you forget those you made partners of God. (40-41)

And before you also, We had sent forth Our messengers to many nations. Thus, We afflicted them with physical and financial adversities so that they submit to God. Then why did they not submit to God when We seized them? In fact, their hearts hardened and Satan made this deed that they had been doing seem fair to them. So when they forgot that through which they had been reminded, We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them; they were left in utter amazement. Thus, those who were unjust were uprooted. And real gratitude is for God alone, the Lord of the Universe. (42-45)

Say: Speak, if God takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than God can restore them to you? See how We present Our revelations from various aspects; even then, they show aversion. Ask: If God’s punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced, who except the unjust would perish? And We send forth messengers only that they give glad tidings and deliver warnings. So, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve. And those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance. (46-49)

Say: I do not claim before you that I have God’s treasures or know what the unknown is nor do I claim to be an angel. I only follow that which is revealed to me. Say: Will the blind and those with sight become equal? Do you then not reflect? (50)

Explanation

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ اِنَّهٗ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِىْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُوْنَكَ وَلٰكِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ
قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوْا عَلٰى مَا كُذِّبُوْا وَاُوْذُوْا حَتّٰٓى اَتٰىهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكَ مِنْ نَّبَاِى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[26]

The expression قَدْ نَعْلَمُ is actually قَدْ كُنَّا نَعْلَمُ. When the word قَدْ is pre-posed to an indefinite verb in this manner, then according to linguistic principles an incomplete verb is suppressed before it. Its presence signifies that the actual purport is: “It has continued to remain in Our knowledge and still is.”

“What they say” refers to the things they say as alluded to in verse 8 and in verses 37 and 50 ahead (If he is God’s Messenger, then why does he not show a miracle? Why does not an angel come down to herald his veracity? Why does he not show a Book directly descending to him from the heavens? Why does he not own a treasure? Why does he not show a sample of the punishment he threatens people with).

The Prophet (sws) is actually assured that if in spite of knowing all this, God is not taking any notice, there is some wisdom concealed in it.

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[26] We have been aware that what they say grieves you. So, be patient. It is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God’s revelations. And other messengers before you have also been rejected. So, they patiently bore their rejection and their harassment until Our help came to them. None can change the decrees of God, and the anecdotes of the prophets have already reached you.

The sentence “it is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God’s revelations” signifies a lot of affection for the Prophet (sws). In other words, if it is actually God’s revelations that they are rejecting, why should the Prophet (sws) feel sad? Their real target is God and they will be taken to task by Him. At the same time, by using the word “unjust” for these rejecters it is shown that it is they who are suffering the loss. These unfortunate and wretched people are unjust to their own souls; neither are they harming him nor God.

In order to further reinforce the assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws), the words “and other messengers before you have also been rejected” point to God’s established practice regarding His messengers: in order to become entitled to God’s direct help, prophets and their followers have to pass through a long and enduring phase of trials. Without this God’s help does not come. During this phase, the people of the prophets continue to refute and reject them. They are inflicted with all sorts of tribulations and harassed in this phase. In this manner, whatever enmity the enemies harbour in their hearts fully manifests itself and whatever abilities prophets and their followers have are polished and become evident. It is at this time that the truth stands conclusively delivered by God to the rejecters of the truth, and a prophet and his followers become entitled to God’s help. This is an established practice of God and no one can change it. The accounts of all messengers of God bear testimony to this established practice.

وَاِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ اِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَاِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ اَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْاَرْضِ اَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَآءِ فَتَاْتِيَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ ؔ وَ الْمَوْتٰى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ
يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[27]

The answer to the condition found in the first verse is suppressed. This is a common linguistic style of Arabic. It has been unfolded in the translation.

It is known that the word جهل occurs as an opposite to both علم (ignorance) andحلم (forbearance). In fact, its dominant usage is in the latter sense. For this reason, it means “to be overwhelmed with emotions.” Because of their pure nature, messengers of God are never overwhelmed by base desires; however, they are overcome at times with noble desires to such an extent that they exceed limits. Though this in itself is a very commendable thing, since they are regarded as a standard and a benchmark, the Almighty does not let them cross the prescribed limits. This can be understood through an example. A messenger has a great desire for his nation to accept faith so that it remains secure from God's punishment. These emotions bear witness to his affection and to the honour he has for the truth. However, these emotions too are only desirable to the extent they are in conformity with God's established practice regarding professing faith. This practice has been referred to in verse 34 earlier. If it appears that a messenger may exceed these limits, the Almighty takes the initiative in stopping him.

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[27] And if their aversion is hard for you to bear, find if you can a tunnel in the earth or a stairway in the sky by which you may bring them a sign. Had God willed, He could have gathered all of them on guidance. So, do not become of those who are overcome by emotions. Only those people shall accept who listen and understand. As for these dead, God will raise them; then they will be returned to Him.

The word يَسْمَعُوْنَ is used in its complete meaning ie, to listen and understand. Those who listen but do not understanding are ones who actually do not listen. The word "dead" refers to those who whose intellect and heart are dead. This is because real life is the life in which a person's intellect and heart are alive.

There exists an apparent rebuke in these verses for the Prophet (sws). However, there is great affection concealed in it. If there is any harshness in it, it is directed to the wretched people whose evasion to faith had made the Prophet (sws) very anxious. He wanted that the miracle they were demanding be shown to them so that they were left with no excuse. So he is told that he can try as hard as he can to bring a miracle, the Almighty is not in favour of making people accept faith through miracles. He wants them to use their ears, eyes and intellect and reflect on the signs found with them and around them. He wants them to intently listen to what the Prophet (sws) is telling them and deliberate on it and accept faith out of their own free will and intention. It was very easy for God to force people to accept faith and this could have happened in the blink of an eye. However, He did not choose this. So the Prophet (sws) should not be so overwhelmed with emotions that he loses sight of God's practice and mercy in this matter.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى
الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّاۤ اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ ؕ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا صُمٌّ وَّبُكْمٌ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ مَنْ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يُضْلِلْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشَاْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۳۹﴾[28]

The "sign" here can refer to any of the signs the disbelievers demanded from the Prophet (sws). However, concomitant indications show that here those people are being responded to who wanted to see a sign that would prove that if they deny the messenger they will be afflicted with punishment. Succeeding verses will themselves gradually unfold this indication. In this *sūrah* as well as at other instances this demand of the disbelievers with the respective messengers of their times is cited. They wanted to see a sample of the punishment they are being threatened with. This would decide the matter between them.

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[28] And they say: "Why was no sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Tell them: God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know, And all the beasts that roam on their legs on the earth and all the birds that soar on both their wings in the air are all communities like your own. And We have left no stone unturned in Our Book. Then all of them will be gathered before their Lord. And those who have denied Our revelations, these deaf and dumb are engulfed in darkness. God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases.

The answer cited in the words "God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know" seems vague apparently. However, concealed in it is great detail. One of the things evident from this demand is that the foolish and arrogant people were not aware of the consequences of such a sign's manifestation. They regarded it to be a matter of mere amusement and jest. The fact is that if such a sign did manifest itself, it would break their backs. Secondly, these people were not aware of the wisdom and established practice which God had decreed for His messengers and their rejecters. It is not God's way to immediately punish the rejecters of His messengers; on the contrary, He gives them respite until a certain time period so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them in every respect. It is after this conclusive communication that He seizes them, and when He seizes them, no one can rescue them from His grasp. Thirdly, they thought that the threat sounded by the Prophet (sws) was false or that God was helpless. The fact is that God gives respite to the rebellious and hence His planning is very-well founded. However much respite He may give, there is no possibility that anyone may escape His grasp. Fourthly, those wretched people were unaware of the mercy concealed in this respite, if they had cared to benefit from it. God takes the lead in showing mercy and not anger. He is very merciful to His people. He keeps the door of repentance and reformation open as long as His creatures do not close them due to their stubbornness and obduracy.

In the expression وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ, a suppression of parallel phrases has occurred, the way it has in verse 134 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. Because of the presence of the expression فِي الْاَرْضِ (in the earth) in the first part of the sentence, there is a suppression of its parallel expression فِي السَّمَآءِ (in the sky) in the second part. Similarly, because of the presence of the expression يَطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ (fly on both their wings) in the second part of the sentence, a suppression of its parallel expression تَدُبُّ عَلٰى رِجْلَيْهَا اَوْ اَرْجُلِهَا (roam on their legs) has occurred in the first part of the sentence.

The words اِلَّآ اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ (are all communities like your own) are especially worthy of consideration. They are rather concise but encapsulate great details. The attention of those who were demanding signs is directed towards the signs around them. The implication is that if they are demanding signs, then the universe around them is replete with them. Every living being that walks on the earth and soars in the sky is a sign of God. If they reflect, they will see that just as in their individual and collective existence they find numerous signs of God's providence, wisdom and power that bear witness to monotheism, reward and punishment and the veracity of the messenger, in a similar way, various creatures that are found in this universe also have these signs. Just as human beings are a species, these creature too have different species. Just as the human beings have a nature and instinct these creatures too have them. Just as human beings have comprehension and emotions, they too are no different in this regard keeping in view their purpose of creation and requirement of their instincts. Just as the awareness about their own collectivity has impelled human beings to live in a political system, each species has an awareness of its collective existence that induces it to live as an organized unit and also preserve its unity and each member participate in the fulfilment of the purpose for which its species was created. In Sūrah al-Naḥl, the Qur'ān has mentioned the honey-bee as an example and referred to the signs of its creator's providence, wisdom and power found in its communities. Today the veils lifted by science from the instinctive traits of the various genres of living beings are amazing. Each of these traits is enough to astound human beings. However, if from among very small and trivial creatures, the honey-bee and ants are deliberated upon, one can gauge remarkable features. One is really astonished at observing them. How splendid is their diligence in nourishing their young ones, vigilance in securing themselves from dangers, foresight in planning for future circumstances, intense sensitivity to collective responsibilities, superb division of labour, a strong system of hierarchy, expending of great effort in making available the needs of life, outstanding skill in making and protecting their food supplies and abodes, deep urge of quest and search, intelligence to realize their goal and the extent of sacrifice and selflessness.

Now the question is: has all this come into existence of its own accord and is continuing to exist on its own or is there a creator and planner behind it? If latter is the case, then has the creator become aloof after creating all this or is He directly governing and protecting this whole universe? Is all this the product of an unbridled fearsome force or the gracious doing of an all-powerful, wise, knowing and merciful being? Is this universe a battle-filed of different mythological deities or the manifestation of the power, providence, mercy and wisdom of a single and peerless God? Does it seem to be a purposeless and meaningless place having no purpose or does it have a grand purpose that shall definitely manifest itself? Does its internal and external forms bear witness that human beings have being created in it to live merrily without being held accountable or do they bear witness that the powerful and wise God who has created it as a favour to them will one day they hold them accountable and deal with them accordingly?

If the nature of a human being has not been perverted and if his intellect has not been paralyzed, then he is forced to confess that the second option of each of the statements stated above is the right one. If it is the correct one and obviously it is the correct one, then the Qur'ān is only inviting people to accept it. So, why is a miracle needed to accept what it says? Every particle of this universe bears evidence to it. Every living being that walks on the land and every bird that soars in the sky gives its testimony in its favour. If a person has shut his eyes to the evidence found in his own being, he can at least open them to see the signs found outside him.

People mostly think that the word "book" in verse 38 to refers to the register in which the accounts of people is maintained. Although this can be correct, but keeping in view the context, my mind is repeatedly inclined to infer that it means the Qur'ān. The implication is that just as this universe is replete with signs that bear evidence to the veracity of the Prophet's message, in the same way God has not left any stone unturned in mentioning arguments in its favour in the Qur'ān. Every single claim is reinforced with irrefutable arguments. Moreover, this is done in so many different styles and ways that only those whose heart and intellect are dead cannot understand them.

The words "then all of them will be gathered before their Lord" sarcastically refer to the fact that as far as signs are concerned both the universe and the scripture are replete with them, but people who do not want to understand cannot be cured. They will now be gathered before their Lord. Only then will they open their eyes.

These blind, deaf and dumb people cannot be cured in this world.

The words "God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases" refers to God's established practice about providing guidance. It is evident from the previous verses that God does not force His guidance into those who do not open their eyes and ears. Only they are guided who are willing to be guided and use the faculties God has blessed them with.

قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتَكُمۡ اِنۡ اَتٰىكُمۡ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوۡ اَتَتۡكُمُ السَّاعَةُ اَغَيۡرَ اللّٰهِ تَدۡعُوۡنَ ۚ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۴۰﴾ بَلۡ اِيَّاهُ تَدۡعُوۡنَ
فَيَكۡشِفُ مَا تَدۡعُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِ اِنۡ شَآءَ وَتَنۡسَوۡنَ مَا تُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[29]

The words اَرَءَيۡتَكُمۡ and اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ are synonymous in meaning. Thus in verse 45 اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ is used exactly similarly.

These verses answer their demand to show them a sign of punishment, and with respect to a specific aspect of human nature also form an irrefutable argument in favour of monotheism. Will they call upon someone other than God if they are actually sent such a sign? The fact is that they will never call their deities for help when it arrives and forget them. Only God can ward off the calamity if He wants.

As for the argument provided by these verses in favour of monotheism, the basic premise in this regard is that human nature bears witness to one God only. Other deities and gods that people set up have no proof in human nature. They are merely

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29. Say: What if God's punishment visits you or the Hour of Doom arrives, will you call anyone except God if you are truthful in your claim? In fact, you call Him alone. Then, if He pleases, He relieves the affliction for which you called Him and you forget those you made partners of God.

hypothetical. For this reason when a person is faced with a severe trial, he forgets these hypothetical deities and only pleads before God. More details on this argument can be looked up in my book "The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism."

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ إِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوْا وَ
لٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتّٰىٓ
إِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَآ أُوْتُوْٓا أَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾[30]

The تَضَرُّع signifies bowing before God with all the humility, devotion and servitude. Here it refers to humility, devotion and servitude of the heart. Its opposite is قساوت which means signifies hard-heartedness, arrogance and lack of fear.

These verses state an established practice of God. Evident from it on the one hand is the ways He adopts to punish a nation towards whom He sends a messenger. What is evident from it on the other hand is that nations which demand a sign as a condition for accepting faith were never fortunate enough to accept faith and were ultimately routed by Him. These verses inform the Prophet (sws) that previous nations towards whom messengers were sent were put through various trials to instil the fear of God in them and to induce them to think that if they do not listen to their messenger they will seized and destroyed by a decisive punishment. History however bears witness that they were not chastened by these divine warnings. Instead of their hearts being melted they became harder and their foul deeds were made to seem fair to them by Satan. Thus instead of desisting from them, they became even more persistent.

The expression "that through which they had been reminded" refers to the financial and corporeal trials God had inflicted them with to remind them that if they do not listen to what their messenger is telling them, then after these trials, a decisive punishment awaits them. However, instead of drawing a lesson from them, they ignored them by thinking that nations normally face such adversities. They reckoned that calamities such as famine, floods, storms and endemics are faced by every nation. So, why then should it be supposed that they were the result of denying a human beings?

The words "We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them" state the next phase of the afore-mentioned established practice of God. At other instances, the

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[30] And before you also, We had sent forth Our messengers to many nations. Thus, We afflicted them with physical and financial adversities so that they submit to God. Then why did they not submit to God when We seized them? In fact, their hearts hardened and Satan made this deed that they had been doing seem fair to them. So when they forgot that through which they had been reminded, We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them; they were left in utter amazement. Thus, those who were unjust were uprooted. And real gratitude is for God alone, the Lord of the Universe.

Qur’ān calls it *imhāl* or giving respite. The implication is that when those who have denied their messengers ignore such warnings from God, they are given more time by Him and the door to fulfil all their demands are opened. A time comes when they brag and boast about their successes. This is the time when their time actually expires. The Almighty then suddenly seizes them. They are then left helpless and astonished.

The word دابر means “root.”

The last verse means that before being uprooted, the gusts of trials that visit such transgressors only shake the branches of their trees of existence and that too temporarily. Their roots remain safe; however, when this time comes, God sends on them such a scourge that uproots them from the ground. The reason for this is that there is no benefit left for the world in the tree that has become poisonous and is also bearing poisonous fruit. This is because this world has been created by its merciful creator for a purpose and to manifest His mercy and justice in it. Being the Lord of the universe, how can He tolerate the existence of a tree in His orchard whose poisonous wind and leaves can destroy the whole orchard? Thus worthy of gratitude is the Lord Who roots out such a wretched nation.

The sequence and coherence of the verses has become evident in this explanation. However, historical evidence of God’s established practice referred to here is only briefly stated here without details. These details will be found in the next *sūrah*, which is a counterpart of the current one. It depicts the history of the past nations of Arabia that were destroyed through divine punishment. It becomes evident through it that these nations too demanded signs from their respective messengers. Thus in order to soften their hearts and direct their attention to Himself, the Almighty inflicted them with various physical and financial trials. Instead of drawing a lesson from them, they totally ignored them regarding them to be accidental happenings. As a consequence of this rebelliousness, they were given full respite by the Almighty. They reaped success after success because Satan inveigled them into thinking that they were treading the path of success. Ultimately when they were inebriated by their successes, divine punishment suddenly seized them and then they came to their senses.

The implication of all this is that the Prophet’s rejecters and those who demand a sign of the punishment from him face the same phase. If they do not learn a lesson from these circumstances, they will meet the same fate.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَ اَبْصَارَكُمْ وَ خَتَمَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِكُمْ مَّنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ
هُمْ يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ [31]

The verb صدف means “to ignore something” and “to withhold one’s self from something.

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[31] Say: Speak, if God takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than God can restore them to you? See how We present Our revelations from various aspects; even then, they show aversion. Ask: If God’s punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced, who except the unjust would perish?

These verses answer their demand for punishment in a different way. Earlier it was said that if God sends them a calamity from the earth or from the heavens, none can stop Him. Now it is stated that if God inflicts them with some intellectual and internal punishment, none can save them. At the moment, their faculties of sight, hearing and understanding are functioning but they are not using them. However, if they are deprived of them by God, none except Him can restore them. /

The word بَغْتَةً means "suddenly" and "appearance of something out of the blue."

The word جَهْرَةً means "openly" and "in the light of day."

Here is needs to be kept in mind that the punishment referred to in "if God's punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced" is the punishment which visits people who deny their respective messengers after the truth is conclusively conveyed to them. The established practice of God regarding this punishment is that those who reject a messenger are destroyed and the believers are saved from it. As for the trials and calamities mentioned earlier, they come to everyone regardless. However, the believers benefit from them and the disbelievers continue to persist on their mischief. In fact, as stated earlier, they become even more stubborn.

وَ مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَ مُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ فَمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَ اَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾[32]

Now with reference to this demand of punishment, the real objective sending messenger is explained. The glad tidings stated in the verse are elucidated by the words "so, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve" and warnings stated in the verse are explained by the words "and those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance." One thing that becomes evident from this is that God's messengers are a manifestation of God's mercy. Punishing others is not the objective of their position; it is the consequence of denying them. Second, the messengers should be asked what they come for ie. guidance about faith and righteous deeds and not to bring forth what they have been sent to save people from. Third, working miracles is neither of their traits nor an essential ingredient of their preaching. Such miracles manifest themselves only to conclusively communicate the truth, if God wants. Fourth, these verses comfort the messenger that he should focus all his attention to his real purpose: delivering of glad tidings and warnings; what is not related to his duties should be left to God by him; they should not worry him without any reason.

قُلْ لَّآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى

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[32] And We send forth messengers only that they give glad tidings and deliver warnings. So, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve. And those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance.

الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾[33]

This verse makes a decisive declaration through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): if they want to debate with him, then it should be about what he is presenting and what he is inviting them to. Why do they dispute with him regarding things he never has laid claim to? If he does not have treasures, when did he say that he had? If he cannot tell them when the punishment or the Day of Judgement will arrive, when did he claim that he had this knowledge? Similarly, he never claimed to be an angel. He is only following the revelation sent down to him by the Almighty and inviting them to follow it.

At the end it is stated that if they are even slightly disposed to using their intellect, do they think that those who have eyes and those who are blind will be equal in the sight of God. In other words, can those who blindly follow their desires become equal to those who do not? Will the righteous and the wrongdoers have the same fate? If the answer to this question is in the negative and obviously it should be in the negative, then this revelation that he is presenting them is more evident than the midday sun. What is then their reason for asking for a sign of punishment? If at their demand he is not showing such a sign, would this revoke the law of reward and punishment he is narrating them in such explicit terms? Why do they not reflect on this?

Section III: Verses (51-55)

In these upcoming verses, the Prophet (sws) is told to leave to themselves those who were demanding signs and punishments. However, he should warn through this book those who fear God and the hereafter.

It is then stated that those who are actually worthy of his affection and attention are those inflicted with poverty among the Muslims and those who have come to him to understand religion. As for the arrogant and haughty who ask from him to show signs and miracles, he should totally ignore them and not show any slackness in his duty by paying more attention to them. Nor should he turn away the poor among the believers merely to please these arrogant elements. These people think that it would lower their status if they sit with these destitute in the gathering of the Prophet (sws) or listen to him. They want him to turn away the poor from his gathering if he wants them to come and listen to him because they are not their equals and sitting with them will make them inferior too. The Prophet (sws) should not the slightest encourage these arrogant elements. If because of their arrogance they have been deprived of faith, he is

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[33]. Say: I do not claim before you that I have God's treasures or know what the unknown is nor do I claim to be an angel. I only follow that which is revealed to me. Say: Will the blind and those with sight become equal? Do you then not reflect?

not to be blamed for this. The Almighty will not ask him about their attitude. Similarly, these people will not be held responsible on the Day of Judgement for the duties imposed on him so that on their demand he turns away the believers from him and in this way commit a great injustice.

It is then stated that the wealth, status and lineage of these arrogant people have become a barrier for them against accepting faith. They think that if all the successes of the world belong to them, then even if this new religion has some good in it, will God choose such people as its advocates who are poor and are not even able to have their daily meals and cover themselves with proper clothes? These wrongdoers do not know that God gives the treasures and pleasures of this world to both the worthy and the unworthy but He only gives the treasure of religion to those who are grateful to Him.

After that the poor and destitute among the believers are shown special affection and fondness in order to do away with any hurt that the comments of the arrogant may have caused them. For this purpose every word of the salutations and blessings they receive from God carries glad tidings of success in both worlds.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَاَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْشَرُوْٓا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ وَلِيٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِيْنَ
يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ ؕ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ
فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِنَا ؕ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ
بِاَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَاِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۙ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ عَمِلَ
مِنْكُمْ سُوْٓءًۢا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
﴿٥٥﴾

And through it warn those who fear to be gathered before their Lord such that they will have no guardian or intercessor so that they may become God-fearing. (51)

And do not drive away from your self those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour. You are in no way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you so that you become among the wrongdoers by driving these people away. And We have in this manner tested one through another so that they say: “Are these people the ones whom God has chosen to show favour among us?” Is God not fully aware of the grateful? And when those people who believe in Our revelations come to you, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord has made mercy mandatory upon Himself so that if anyone among you commits evil out of foolishness, then after that repents and mends his ways, then God is Forgiving and Merciful. And in this manner, do We explain Our revelations so that the attitude of the righteous also becomes apparent and the path adopted by the wrongdoers becomes fully evident too. (52-55)

Explanation

وَاَنۡذِرۡ بِهِ الَّذِيۡنَ يَخَافُوۡنَ اَنۡ يُّحۡشَرُوۡۤا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ لَيۡسَ لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ وَلِىٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيۡعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمۡ يَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿٥١﴾ [34]

Earlier it had been declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that neither is he the owner of treasures nor does he have knowledge of the unseen world nor does he claim to be an angel. He only follows the revelation sent down to him. Now the Prophet (sws) is asked to leave to themselves those who were demanding a sign from him. However, he should warn through the Qur'ān those who use their intellect and insight and who fear that they will be one day gathered before their Lord and that too in a manner that no intercessor or helper would be there to save them from God. Those who have this fear in them will benefit from this book and by coming God-conscious will mend their ways. As for those who have no fear of the hereafter or those who bank on their intercessors and deities to save them from God will never accept faith even if they see all kinds of signs.

Three things become evident from this verse.

Firstly, the most natural and logical means for warning is the Qur'ān and not signs of punishment.

Secondly, this Qur'ān will also benefit only those whose natural abilities are alive. It will not benefit those whose natural abilities have become dead.

Thirdly, the greatest impediment to piety and charity is the erroneous concept of intercession.

وَلَا تَطۡرُدِ الَّذِيۡنَ يَدۡعُوۡنَ رَبَّهُمۡ بِالۡغَدٰوةِ وَالۡعَشِىِّ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ وَجۡهَهٗ ؕ مَا عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡ حِسَابِهِمۡ مِّنۡ شَىۡءٍ وَّمَا مِنۡ حِسَابِكَ
عَلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ شَىۡءٍ فَتَطۡرُدَهُمۡ فَتَكُوۡنَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ [35]

It is evident from the previous verse which people the Prophet (sws) must focus his attention on and which he must disregard. Now it is further being explained he should not waste any more time on the wretched among them who are inebriated by their status and have become arrogant because of their wealth. They do not give him any importance because he does not own treasures and disparage his companions because they are poor, weak and do not have any status in the society. The Prophet (sws) is told that in his worry for the faith of these arrogant elements, he should not show any slackness in fulfilling the rights of those who have professed faith in God's revelation and are constantly worshipping and showing obedience to God.

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[34] And through it warn those who fear to be gathered before their Lord such that they will have no guardian or intercessor so that they may become God-fearing.

[35] And do not drive away from your self those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour. You are in no way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you so that you become among the wrongdoers by driving these people away.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that just as the leaders of the Quraysh would fashion excuses to oppose the call of the Prophet (sws), they would also argue that his companions were all poor who did menial jobs and how could God select such lowly sections of the society for His religion; and if these lowly people are regarded worthy of this religion then how can the decent and noble have any chance to enter into the folds of this religion and be humiliated thereby. It is because of this mentality that the Almighty has directed the Prophet (sws) to not make the mistake of losing his true companions in order win over these people. These stray sheep do not deserve the attention of a shepherd at the expense of those who rally around him. Now if these people persist in their error, he will not be held responsible for it. They will be held accountable. And if the Prophet (sws) now disregards his true companions these wayward elements will not be held responsible so that he ends up among the wrongdoers for their sake.

This directive was not given to the Prophet (sws) because there was any chance that he would disregard his true companions or distance them from himself. This is in fact a blow at the arrogance of the leaders of the Quraysh. However, instead of addressing them, the Prophet (sws) is addressed. This is to make evident to them that they are not even worthy of being addressed directly. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should let them utter whatever nonsense they are uttering. If this is an impediment to them in accepting faith, let them go to whichever place in Hell they want to; he is not responsible for them in any way. He cannot turn away those who have come to him to seek God. He must fulfil his responsibilities towards them. If he goes after these wretched elements, they will not be held responsible on his behalf while he ends up not fulfilling the rights of those who are in fact worthy of his attention and affection.

The word تَطْرُد used here is a very harsh word viz a viz its meaning; it means to disparagingly disregard someone. However, it has been used with reference to the mentality of the leaders of the Quraysh because it was their desire that the Prophet (sws) disparagingly drive away his companions who were poor and belonged to the common masses; if he does so, then they will listen to him.

Here one should also keep in mind the character of the prophets of God that they are very desirous of their nation to accept faith, as is alluded to in the Qur'ān. In this regard Jesus (sws) has stated a parable also: "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off." (Matthew, 18:12-13)

Just as this parable shows the great affection God has for people who turn to Him after being in error, it also shows the worry and concern of His prophets for the faith and reformation of their nations. This attribute of the messengers is a reflection of God’s attribute. Hence it is a likable one. However, this attribute too has its bounds and limits. God does not want his prophet to go after those people who have gone astray at the expense of his real companions.

Ustādh Farāhī has written some very important points related to this topic in his exegesis of Sūrah ‘Abas. I will also express my opinion at an appropriate instance.

وَكَذٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِنَا ؕ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[36]

In the word لِيَقُوْلُوْٓا, the particle ل is for *‘āqibah* that expresses the consequence and it is not causative. This is a mention of the established practice of God: if some people are given wealth by Him in this world, it is not because they deserve it. Similarly, poverty too is not the result of this basis. Both affluence and poverty are a source of trial. If God makes some people wealthy, it is to check whether they show gratitude and humility at this favour or become arrogant and disparage the poor and regard these favours to be their monopoly. Similarly, if He makes some people poor, it is to test their patience on this adversity, contentment on meagre resources and satisfaction on God’s scheme. The other outcome could be that they become frustrated, perturbed and angry at God.

Instead of being a source of gratitude, the affluence of the Quraysh has become a trial for them. They think that they have a birthright towards all these favours and are the sole owners of all position of high status. The result of this wrong perception is that they think that if Islam was something superior, God would not have chosen these destitute and penniless as its worthy recipients. Why was not the rich nobility of the Quraysh and the chiefs of Ṭā’if be considered for it? The Qur’ān has referred to this arrogance of the Quraysh at other instances as well. For example in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, it is stated: قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ.[37] In verse 31 of Sūrah Hūd, the words are: وَّلَآ اَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَزْدَرِيْٓ اَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا.[38]

These people regarded prophethood to be their monopoly, what to speak of faith and would openly say that if God was to make someone a prophet, He would have made some affluent person of Makkah or Ṭā’if; could He find only this person for this responsibility?

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[36] And We have in this manner tested one through another so that they say: “Are these people the ones whom God has chosen to show favour among us?” Is God not fully aware of the grateful?

[37] The disbelievers said about the believers: “Had there been any good in the Qur’ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us.”

[38] And I do not claim before you that I have the treasures of God. Nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen. I also do not claim to be an angel. And I cannot say about those whom your eyes see as inferior that God cannot even bless them with any good. God alone better knows whatever is in their hearts. If I do this, it is I who would be unjust.

In response to their haughtiness, the Qur’ān says: “Is God not fully aware of the grateful?” The implication is that God’s religion is not gold, silver, silk or velvet whose saddles or pieces of cloth can be seen on donkeys, mules, horses and camels. It is a heavenly favour and divine mercy which is specific for only those who were grateful to God in all circumstances, gave due regard to His favours, fully used their abilities, kept their ears open, did not blindfold their eyes with the cloth of arrogance and did not let their hearts become dead. As for the wretched and ingrates who used all the inner and outer favours God blessed them with against God Himself, they will never have a share in this favour. Worldly pleasures are received by both the good and the wicked. However, the gift of religion is only given to those who are grateful to God.

وَاِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۙ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوْٓءًا ۢبِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵۴﴾[39]

Just as the expression سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ is spoken at the times of meeting and parting, it is also used at the times of welcoming someone. For example, it is stated in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Naḥl that angels while welcoming those who had remained steadfast on the belief of monotheism will say: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ۙ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ.[40]

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) is directed to adopt an attitude opposite to what the chiefs of the Quraysh demanded with the poor among the believers. It has been pointed out earlier that these chiefs wanted that the Prophet (sws) distance himself from these believers.

Here the glad tidings given by the Almighty are of mercy and forgiveness and nothing related to worldly affluence and status. This sheds light on the inner selves of these poor believers who had no desires for these things. In spite of being deprived of worldly resources, they did not want them. The only desire they had was to please their creator and master. Earlier in verse 52, they are referred to by the words: “those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour.” It is keeping in consideration this most desired thing on their part that the Almighty has given glad tidings to them. It also becomes evident from this that there is no weight in the eyes of the believers of things which these slaves of the world vehemently desire – neither in this world nor in the next.

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[39] And when those people who believe in Our revelations come to you, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord has made mercy mandatory upon Himself so that if anyone among you commits evil out of foolishness, then after that repents and mends his ways, then God is Forgiving and Merciful.

[40] “Peace be to you people. Go and dwell in Paradise as a reward for your deeds.”

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[41]

The clause to which وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ is coordinated is suppressed. If it is unfolded, the verse would read: وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ.

Mentioned earlier are the attitudes of the believers and the disbelievers. Here at the ends this verse sums them up so that nothing needlessly worries the Prophet (sws).

Section IV: Verses (56-67)

In this section the same topic that is already under discussion is taken up in a new style with some new aspects.

It is declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that these people associate partners with God and fight with him in their favour; however, he himself has been stopped by the Almighty from worshipping them. Hence there is absolutely no possibility that he follow their religious innovations. This directive of God is based on a clear and irrefutable argument. In this regard, His Lord's testimony exists in the form of the revelations that he receives from Him. However, these people deny these revelations and are not willingly to accept unless God's punishment is shown to them. They should know that it is not in his jurisdiction to show them this punishment. It is in fact God's prerogative only. Had it been in his jurisdiction, the dispute would have long been settled. He can only inform them that only God will decide this dispute and only He knows its time and manner for such secrets of the universe are only known to Him.

After that it is stated that after they die, people will be raised to life one day and after that all will be gathered before the same God and held accountable. This is such a reality that its rehearsal can be witnessed in this world every day. But what is the cure of people who have shut their eyes?

After that attention is directed to a psychological aliment of human beings: when they are afflicted with a trial, they call upon God alone and forget everyone else. However, as soon as they are delivered by Him from this trial they immediately return to their previous foolish ways as if nothing had actually happened. They then think that they are beyond the grasp of God. The implication is that the Prophet's addresses who are demanding from him to show the punishment are also afflicted with the same ailment. The Prophet (sws) should tell them that every thing has a prescribed time. They will see it when its time comes.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

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[41] And in this manner, do We explain Our revelations so that the attitude of the righteous also becomes apparent and the path adopted by the wrongdoers becomes fully evident too.

Text and Translation

قُلْ اِنِّىْ نُهِيْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَتَّبِعُ اَهْوَآءَكُمْ ۙ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ اِذًا وَّمَاۤ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾
قُلْ اِنِّىْ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّىْ وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ مَا عِنْدِىْ مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفٰصِلِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾
قُلْ لَّوْ اَنَّ عِنْدِىْ مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِهٖ لَقُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَاۤ
اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْاَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَّلَا يَابِسٍ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ
مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰۤى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ
يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَ
هُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۟ وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يُّنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَ
الْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهٗ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجٰىنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ
اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلٰۤى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِكُمْ اَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَّيُذِيْقَ
بَعْضَكُمْ بَاْسَ بَعْضٍ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِهٖ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ؕ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾ؕ لِكُلِّ نَبَاٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ ۫ وَّسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Say: I have been stopped from worshipping those whom you invoke besides God. Say: I cannot follow your desires. If I do this, I will deviate from the true path and not remain among those are guided. Say: I am on a radiant argument from my Lord and you have denied it. I do not have what you are insisting to hasten. Its decision rests with God only. He alone shall explain the truth and He is the best of judges. Say: If with me was that which you are insisting to hasten, then this dispute between me and you would have been settled. And God is well aware of the unjust. And the keys to the Unseen lie with Him alone; none but He knows them. He is aware of all that is in the land and in the sea. Every leaf that falls from a tree is in His knowledge and every grain in the depth of the earth that falls and every dry or wet thing are recorded in an open book. (56-59)

And it is He Who makes you die at night and knows what you have done during the day. Then He raises you up in it so that the prescribed time span is completed. Ultimately to Him is your return. Then He will tell you what you have been doing. And He fully dominates His servants and deputes His guardians over you. Until when the time of death of anyone of you arrives, it is only Our angels who claim his soul and they are not negligent in this task. Then all of them will be returned to their true Lord only. Listen! All the authority to take a decision rests with Him, and most swift is He in taking account. (60-62)

Ask them: Who saves you from the extensive darkness of the land and sea when you are calling imploringly and in secret: “If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?” Say: It is God Who delivers you from this calamity and from all others, yet you again worship idols. Say: God has power to send some torment upon you from above you or punish you from beneath your feet or engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions and make one fully taste the power of the other. See how We mention Our revelations in various ways so that they may understand. (63-65)

And your people rejected it even though it is the very truth. Say: I have not been made a keeper over you. A time for everything has been prescribed and soon you will know. (66-67)

Explanation

قُلْ إِنِّيْ نُهِيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ لَّآ أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَآءَكُمْ ۙ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَّمَآ أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[42]

The word قُلْ (say) occurs in this verse and is also repeated in later ones. This evidences that what is stated is stated through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in response to the doubts, objections, questions and demands raised by the Quraysh in the heat of debate at that time. In order to fully understand them, it is essential to keep in view their background. This is because the Qur’ān does not always cite the question or demand of the disbelievers before responding to it.

Earlier in verse 14 it is said: “I have been directed to profess faith the foremost and not be among the polytheists.” After that, it was stated that the greatest testimony of God having a partner or not is that of God Himself. The testimony found in the revelation sent to the Prophet (sws) is that God is one. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) is not prepared to associate anyone with Him against this testimony.

Now in the verse under discussion, this declaration is repeated in the negative sense: the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from invoking those things these disbelievers invoke. Here “invoking” obviously means to invoke in the form of a supplication and acquire mercy. In this way, invoking anyone besides God is actually worshiping that entity and this is polytheism. The word “desires” refers to their religious innovations and by referring to them as اَهْوَآء, the Qur’ān has pointed to their baselessness: there is no evidence of their deities being partners of God neither in human intellect or nature nor in the Book of God; their fancies have concocted them and since their rather vague intercession has made them shirk all their responsibilities related to faith and deeds and the Hereafter, hence they like them a lot. They may like them but there is a great difference between reality and whims. It is not possible for the Prophet (sws) to disregard reality and follow their false desires, evil wishes and baseless innovations.

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[42] Say: I have been stopped from worshipping those whom you invoke besides God. Say: I cannot follow your desires. If I do this, I will deviate from the true path and not remain among those are guided.

The verse states that if he does this, he will be deviating from the path of salvation and then will never be guided. The implication is that in the first place such is the deviant nature of polytheism that a person strays from the straight path and gets entangled in crooked sideways to such an extent that it is not possible for him to come back to the real path. In the second place, if the Prophet (sws) makes this mistake after he was expressly stopped by God, then who will graciously guide him back to the right path?

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُم بِهِ ۚ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۚ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

قُل لَّوْ أَنَّ عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾[43]

The word بَيِّنَةٍ (radiant argument) refers to the Qur’ān that was revealed by God as evidence that He has no associate. This testimony is mentioned earlier in verse 19 and in verse 157 ahead the same word is used for the Qur’ān: .

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِه is بَيِّنَة translated above as “radiant argument.” A feminine pronoun should have been used here for it; however, the reason that the masculine pronoun is used instead is that it refers to the meaning and connotation of the word.[44] The benefit of this usage is that the nature of the Qur’ān as a conclusive proof becomes evident and that the word بَيِّنَة refers to the Qur’ān also becomes evident.

The verse means that these people are wildly conjecturing and following their desires as they do not have any proof in favour of their hypothetical deities being associates of God. On the contrary, the Prophet (sws) has a clear proof from God that he is presenting before them. God Himself has revealed this “radiant argument” to him. It is so evident that it cannot be refuted yet they still refute it and instead of understanding it demand from the Prophet (sws) to show them God’s torment after which they will accept the veracity of this Book. But the torment they are demanding is not under the Prophet’s jurisdiction. He cannot therefore fulfil their demand to hasten it. Only God has the authority to send it. All that the Prophet (sws) can do is to explain to them that God will elucidate the truth and will resolve this dispute in the best possible way.

The sentence “and God is well aware of the unjust” has two aspects. Firstly, it threatens the disbelievers that since He is fully aware of such unjust people, He will deal with them in a manner they deserve. Secondly, it urges the believers to consign the matter of such people to God. Here injustice refers to injustice to one’s own soul. The implication is that God is granting them His mercy but they are demanding torment from Him. They are being given fodder but they are demanding what has no

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[43] Say: I am on a radiant argument from my Lord and you have denied it. I do not have what you are insisting to hasten. Its decision rests with God only. He alone shall explain the truth and He is the best of judges. Say: If with me was that which you are insisting to hasten, then this dispute between me and you would have been settled. And God is well aware of the unjust.

[44] Allāmah Ibn Qayyim has discussed this style in detail in his books and at an appropriate instance, I will also discuss its eloquence.

nourishment for them.

وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِیْ ظُلُمٰتِ
الْاَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَّلَا يَابِسٍ اِلَّا فِیْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۵۹﴾[45]

The word مَفَاتِحُ is the plural of مفتح and means keys. This topic is also mentioned in verse 12 of Sūrah Shūrā thus: لَهٗ مَقَالِيْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ.[46] Expressions like "land and sea" and "dry and wet" are meant to signify the all-embracing nature of God's knowledge. "Depth of the earth" refers to its layers and sections.

This verse is actually an extension of what is said in the previous verse. When it was stated that the decision of the punishment rests with God alone, the occasion became apt to express the extent of His knowledge. It is belief in this vastness of God's knowledge that engenders complete trust and satisfaction in a believer on His will. The slightest of misconceptions in this opens the door to polytheism. It is this belief which is the foundation of true and strong faith in the Hereafter, and it is through its true concept and reminder that the very humility is engendered in a person which induces him to adopt the right attitude in life. This statement of the Qur'ān negates the view held by some people that God only has knowledge of the whole. It is evident that He also is aware of all components of the whole

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰۤى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ
يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ
رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۟ وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾[47]

The extent of God's knowledge has occasioned the mention of reminding people of the hereafter and the reward and punishment that will take place in it. Thus one inference ensues from another. It needs to be kept in mind that erroneous views about the hereafter have arisen because of not having the correct conception of God's knowledge. Human beings having limited intelligence think that who can have the complete knowledge of the life and death and every minute deed of so many creatures so that He can recreate them after death and hold them accountable for their deeds. The Qur'ān has dispelled this erroneous notion here.

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[45] And the keys to the Unseen lie with Him alone; none but He knows them. He is aware of all that is in the land and in the sea. Every leaf that falls from a tree is in His knowledge and every grain in the depth of the earth that falls and every dry or wet thing are recorded in an open book.

[46] To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases.

[47] And it is He Who makes you die at night and knows what you have done during the day. Then He raises you up in it so that the prescribed time span is completed. Ultimately to Him is your return. Then He will tell you what you have been doing. And He fully dominates His servants and deputes His guardians over you. Until when the time of death of anyone of you arrives, it is only Our angels who claim his soul and they are not negligent in this task. Then all of them will be returned to their true Lord only. Listen! All the authority to take a decision rests with Him, and most swift is He in taking account.

The Qur'ān here by regarding sleeping during each night as death and waking up each morning as rising has directed our attention to the fact that life and death take place every day the way people sleep and wake up. The same goes for the death and resurrection of people. Just as God is not unaware of the deeds done in the day by a person who sleeps at night, similarly He will not forget the deeds of a person done during his life when he undertakes the sleep of death. Moreover, just as there is a dawn to every night's sleep and people get up rubbing their eyes, in a similar way after the sleep of death they will wake up in the dawn of the Day of Judgement and they will think that whatever happened did not take more time than the span of a day and night.

The meaning of the words قہر and تفریط have been stated under verses 18 and 38 respectively. The word حَفَظَةً is the plural of حافظ and means "guardians." Here, the reference is to the guardians deputed on every soul by God.

The implied meaning is that no one should think that God is the slightest unaware of any of His creatures or any sheep of His herd. Everyone is under His control all the time. His angels continuously guard them and never for even a moment show any slackness in this duty.

After death, everyone will face God because He is their real guardian and protector. Deities and intercessors these people have fashioned will be of no use to them.

قُلْ مَنْ يُّنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهٗ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجٰىنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾
قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ
مِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِكُمْ اَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَّيُذِيْقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَاْسَ بَعْضٍ ۗ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَكَذَّبَ
بِهٖ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۗ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾ لِكُلِّ نَبَاٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ ۚ وَّسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ [48]

The word "darkness" here signifies "calamities" and "adversities." The darkness of the ocean is mentioned thus in verse 40 of Sūrah al-Nūr: اَوْ كَظُلُمٰتٍ فِيْ بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَّغْشٰىهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ مَوْجٌ

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48. Ask them: Who saves you from the extensive darkness of the land and sea when you are calling imploringly and in secret: "If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?" Say: It is God Who delivers you from this calamity and from all others, yet you again worship idols. Say: God has power to send some torment upon you from above you or punish you from beneath your feet or engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions and make one fully taste the power of the other. See how We mention Our revelations in various ways so that they may understand. And your people rejected it even though it is the very truth. Say: I have not been made a keeper over you. A time for everything has been prescribed and soon you will know.

مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ سَحَابٌ ؕ ظُلُمٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ؕ اِذَاۤ اَخْرَجَ يَدَهٗ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرٰىهَا.[49] People face the same storms and adversities on land as well.

The word تَدْعُوْنَهٗ signifies state (*ḥāl*) from the accusative pronoun in يُنَجِّيْكُمْ. The word تَضَرُّع is used in opposition to خُفْيَةً. For this reason, it means “to plead and cry.”

“If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?” are words which every person in such a situation utters.

The word لبس means “to mix and merge.” Here the expression in which it is used means “engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions.”

The pronoun “it” in “and your people rejected it” can refer to the punishment mentioned in verse 58 and also the Qur’ān which is informing them of this punishment and which is alluded to in verse 57.

The word نَبَاٍ means the news of an important incident. Here it refers to the punishment the Qur’ān is informing people of.

The word مُّسْتَقَرٌّ can refer both to the locus and time and can also be considered as a verbal noun. I have interpreted it in the meaning of time.

These verses unveil a spiritual ailment of human beings and at the same time also point to a psychological argument in favour of monotheism. The context is the same as before: refutation of the demand of punishment.

Here two things need to be kept in mind.

As for the first thing, it is an evident fact that whenever a person is in great difficulty, he invokes God alone and forgets all other supports. This is a proof of the fact that only one God exists in human nature. All the rest are baseless fabrications which are disregarded by a person’s imagination as soon as he faces some trial. I have explained this in detail in my book “The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism.”

As for the second, the verses place polytheism and gratitude as opposites to one another. It is evident from this that polytheism is not just worshipping idols, it is amounts to that arrogance overcome by which a person thinks that all the favours he has is because of his effort and planning. Such arrogance makes him reckless and heedless. This state is opposite to that of gratitude and a person who is overcome with this notion begins to regard himself to be equal to God. In Sūrah al-Kahf, the Qur’ān has depicted this mentality in the following words:

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّ حَفَفْنٰهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَّ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اٰتَتْ اُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِّنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ۙ وَّ فَجَّرْنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا ۙ وَّ كَانَ لَهٗ ثَمَرٌ ۚ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهٖ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗۤ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّ اَعَزُّ نَفَرًا وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ ۚ قَالَ مَاۤ اَظُنُّ اَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖۤ اَبَدًا ۙ وَّ مَاۤ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ

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[49] Or think as if there is expansive darkness in a deep sea with wave upon wave rising up; clouds overspread from the top. Layers of darkness, one on top of the other. If someone takes out his hand, he is not even able to see it. And he whom God does not give light, for him there is no light.

وَّلَىِٕنۡ رُّدِدۡتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّىۡ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهَا مُنۡقَلَبًا قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗۤ اَكَفَرۡتَ بِالَّذِىۡ خَلَقَكَ مِنۡ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ
مِنۡ نُّطۡفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰٮكَ رَجُلًا لٰـكِنَّا۠ هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّىۡ وَلَاۤ اُشۡرِكُ بِرَبِّىۡۤ اَحَدًا. (۱۸: ۳۲-۳۸)

And narrate to them the parable of the two individuals. For one of them, We made two orchards of grapes, surrounded them with rows of date-palms and also placed between them pieces of cultivatable land. Both orchards bore a lot of fruit; not the slightest reduction took place. And in their centre We made a stream to flow as well. And when its time to bear fruit arrived, he argued with his companion: "I have more wealth than you and am more powerful than you with regard to numbers too." And he entered his orchard while he was being unjust to his soul. He said: "I do not think that this shall ever perish and I do not suppose that the Day of Judgement shall ever come. And even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall only find a better place to where I return." His companion, while conversing with him, said: "Have you denied the Being Who created you from clay, then from a drop of fluid, then made you a complete human being? But my Lord is precisely that God and I do not associate any partners with my Lord. (18:32-36)

The verses under discussion go on to say that people should not think that if at that time people are living peacefully, God's punishment will never seize them. As described in the verses, He can seize them any time in any manner.

The words "and your people rejected it even though it is the very truth" imply that the news of the punishment the Qur'ān is informing them of is certain and in spite of that his nation rejected it. The Prophet (sws) should now leave their matter to God and inform them that he has not been sent to them to force them to accept faith. His only responsibility is to warn and preach them, which he has done. If they are now insisting to hasten the punishment, they should know that every event has a prescribed time in God's calendar. It will happen when its time arrives.

Section V: Verses (68-73)

In the coming verses, the address shifts to the Prophet (sws) and the believers. They are told that they should not go after the stubborn elements who do not even want to listen. When he sees that they are indulging in frivolous arguments and mockery, he should leave them. Only when should he converse with them if he sees that they are in the mood. His responsibility is just to preach and deliver the message. He is not responsible for their faith so that he should try to force them to accept it. He should also disregard their ever-new demands. He should merely warn and advise them through the Qur'ān in the best way. Those who want to mend their ways will do so and not be taken to task because of their deeds. No support, intercession or remuneration is of any avail before God.

After that, it has been declared through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that the believers are not willing to even enter the whirlpool of polytheism once God’s guidance has come to them. They have been asked to consign themselves to the Lord of the worlds, to pray to Him and to fear Him only. Anyone who wishes can adopt this path and is also free to wander about. The implied meaning is that now there is no question of any debate in this matter in the wake of this declaration.

At the end, the purposeful nature of this universe is indicated. Evident from it is that the hereafter is bound to come. On that day, it is God alone Who will decide matters. He is wise and knowledgeable. On that day everyone will know the truth to be true and falsehood to be false. So, if these people do not listen, the Prophet (sws) should leave their matter to them.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ؕ وَاِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (٦٨) وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّلٰكِنْ ذِكْرٰى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ (٦٩) وَذَرِ
الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهٖٓ اَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖۗ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اُبْسِلُوْا بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ (٧٠) قُلْ اَنَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ
الشَّيٰطِيْنُ فِي الْاَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ ۠ لَهٗٓ اَصْحٰبٌ يَّدْعُوْنَهٗٓ اِلَى الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ؕ وَاُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ (٧١) وَاَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّقُوْهُ ؕ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ (٧٢) وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَيَوْمَ
يَقُوْلُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ؕ۬ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ ؕ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ (٧٣)

And when you see those people who criticize Our revelations, withdraw from them until they engage in some other conversation. And if Satan makes you forget this, do not sit with these unjust people after you realize it. Those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Only, reminding them so that they also have fear. Leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world, and keep reminding through this Qur’ān so that a person as punishment of his misdeeds is not consigned to destruction. He will not have any helper or intercessor before God, and even if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. It is these people who shall be consigned to destruction due to their misdeeds. Because of the disbelief they have been committing, they shall have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment. (68-70)

Say: Should we call on those besides God which can neither benefit nor harm us?

And we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us like him who is left perplexed in the desert by devils, even though his companions are calling him to the right path: "Come to us." Say: God's guidance is the real guidance and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds, and have been directed: Be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth. The day when He says: "Be," so it shall be. His word is certain to materialize. The day when the trumpet is sounded, sovereignty shall only belong to Him. He has knowledge of all the unknown and the manifest. And He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. (71-73)

Text and Translation

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ۭ وَاِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّلٰكِنْ ذِكْرٰى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَ
ذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهٖٓ اَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ڰ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ وَلِيٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ اُبْسِلُوْا بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّ
عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[50]

The word خوض means "to enter into something." The expression خاض الماء means "he entered into the water." The idiom خوض فى الحديث ensues from this meaning. It means to engage in frivolous talk, hair-splitting and baseless criticism. It is used in the Qur'ān at many instances and means to engage in silly conversation to dismiss something by scoffing at and making fun of it. For example in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, it is said: **وَلَىِٕنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ كُنَّا اِنَّمَا نَخُوْضُ وَنَلْعَبُ** (And if you ask them, they will reply: we were engaging in light-hearted talk and making fun).

Here, in the verses under discussion too, this word has been explained by the words "leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement." In other words after mentioning the word, its purpose has been elucidated. In verse 140 of Sūrah al-Nisā' too, the Qur'ān has explained this word. Thus while referring to this very verse, it is stated: وَقَدۡ نَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِى الۡكِتٰبِ اَنۡ اِذَا سَمِعۡتُمۡ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكۡفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسۡتَهۡزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقۡعُدُوۡا مَعَهُمۡ حَتّٰى يَخُوۡضُوۡا فِىۡ حَدِيۡثٍ غَيۡرِهٖٓ (He has revealed in this very Book the instruction that wherever you hear that God’s revelations are being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit there with them until they get engaged in some other talk). Here the word خوض has been explained as rejecting God’s revelation and making fun of them).

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[50] And when you see those people who criticize Our revelations, withdraw from them until they engage in some other conversation. And if Satan makes you forget this, do not sit with these unjust people after you realize it. Those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Only, reminding them so that they also have fear. Leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world, and keep reminding through this Qur'ān so that a person as punishment of his misdeeds is not consigned to destruction. He will not have any helper or intercessor before God, and even if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. It is these people who shall be consigned to destruction due to their misdeeds. Because of the disbelief they have been committing, they shall have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment.

Here though the address is in the singular which predominantly shows that it is directed to the Prophet (sws), but in reality it is directed to all the believers through him. Thus it was indicated in the very next verse that this address is a general one. The words are: “those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Moreover, in the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’ cited earlier, it has been explicitly shown that the address is general because in it people are taken to task for violating the directive mentioned here in Sūrah al-An‘ām.

This directive has two aspects and both are very important.

Firstly, this attitude is against the underlying wisdom of preaching that the Almighty has prescribed. When a person is overcome by frenzy in opposing something and making fun of it and rejecting it, and the intensity of this frenzy is actually making him hysterical, presenting that very thing before him in this condition will only enhance his frenzy and hysteria. If a doctor wants to only increase the ailment of a patient, obviously he can do whatever he wants to; however, a benevolent doctor who wants his patient to get well will never make this mistake. Keeping in view this principle, Muslims are directed here that if they see the opponents of Islam intent on making fun of the Qur’ān, have taken to scoffing at divine revelations and have made up their mind to fully oppose it, then they should look for an opportune time in which these people have come out of this frenzied state. Once they get back to normal, it is then that they should proceed to present and preach Islam to them.

Secondly, sitting with them in these circumstances is against the sense of honour a person has or should have. If a person or a group openly utters nonsense against God and His Messenger, then not only fighting with him is wrong for a preacher, but also remaining silent for him is inapt. This is because his sense of honour and support for the truth is sacrificed – something which is actually a sign of his faith. This weakness of faith can ultimately lead a person in a gradual way to hypocrisy. Once a person reaches this state, he begins to put up with hearing and listening to the humiliation of God, His Messenger, the Qur’ān and the *sharī‘ah*, and his sense of honour is lulled to such sleep that he finds no courage within him to utter a word in defence of his beliefs.

Here this directive takes into account both these aspects. The first is evident from the context and the second is evident from the afore-mentioned verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’ because it is referred to there and the hypocrites are reprimanded for participating in the gatherings of the rivals where God’s revelations were openly made fun of even though they had been stopped from it.

It is follows from all this that sitting in gatherings in which God’s directives are mocked and made fun of is against one’s honour and if one indulges in it, it will be hypocrisy and disbelief.

At times, it happens that while sitting in a gathering the conversation that ensues gradually leads to the stage that God’s revelations are made fun of. At that instance, a person feels that he should not sit at such a place. Similarly, if such a person was engaged in a polemical debate, he may think that if he now leaves that place his rivals will ridicule him. Both these situations can become a trial for people. If a person out of respect for the gathering does not leave it, it would mean that he has no honour left in him for his religion. In such a case, he should think whether he would even remain silent if his parents are abused in front of him whereas the obligation he owes to God and His directives is much greater than his obligation to his parents. Now in the second case, a person may choose to stick at that place to make evident the truth and falsify falsehood. However, he should know that when the minds of people are corrupted and conversing with them will only enhance their anger, then such an engagement merely becomes a question of one’s ego. It will not be helpful for the cause of truth at all and in fact it will be severely compromised. For this reason, a person should recognize that this is actually a ploy of Satan and immediately exit from such a place.

It needs to be kept in mind here that the true meaning of the expression “and if Satan makes you forget this” is that if Satan makes the believers face such a situation because of some trick, then they should leave the gathering as soon as they realize their folly. It is evident from this that in the first place a person should always remain vigilant from the deceptions of Satan, but if he somehow falls prey to him, then he should walk away from such gatherings as soon as he realizes that he was at the wrong place. This is because those who make fun of God’s revelations are the ones who are the most unjust to their souls and it is not known when God may get angry on these hypocrites for remaining in their company.

The words “those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people; only, reminding them so that they also have fear” sound an assurance to the believers and ask them to adopt a moderate and wise methodology of preaching referred to in the previous verse. In other words, the believers should keep in mind that the responsibility of the believers regarding the disbelievers is to merely communicate the religion of God to them. The purpose is that they too become fearful of God. The believers are not responsible for changing the faith of the disbelievers by force. If these disbelievers accept faith, they will be rewarded for it and if they remain adamant on their disbelief they themselves will be responsible for it before God on the Day of Judgement. The believers – when they truly remained fearful to God – will not be held responsible for the attitude of these rebellious people. It should remain clear that before God no soul will be responsible for another. The responsibility of those who fear God regarding others is to only to convey the truth to them and to remind them of it. For this, they must wait for opportune moments and must not go after others thinking that they are responsible to make them accept faith. Verse 105 of Sūrah al-

Mā'idah discusses this topic: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَّنْ ضَلَّ اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ (Believers! Concentrate on your own selves; if you are on the right path, then those who have strayed cannot harm you at all).

There are several points mentioned in the verses under discussion that merit attention.

Firstly, though in the previous verse the address was singular, but the discourse was directed at the believers. Thus this became evident with its gradual progression.

Secondly, they show the zeal and enthusiasm of the companions. It is clearly evident from these verses that they were so conscious of their responsibility of bearing witness to the truth that they thought that if people did not accept faith they would be held liable for it.

Thirdly, they show the importance of preaching. This is because it is very apparent from the verses that though the believers would not be responsible for others not accepting faith, they will certainly be held reliable if they did not preach and remind people.

The word "religion" in "leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world" refers to the religion God revealed to them and which the prophet and his companions were presenting to them. The implied meaning is that what good can be expected from people who are so wretched as to make fun of something that was revealed for them? The Prophet (sws) should leave them alone and not go after them. He should know that there is no need to satisfy people who are non-serious and careless about life and are so indifferent as to make fun of religion.

Their real misconception is that since they are leading a successful life, then their attitude must be definitely correct. They give the life of this world the status of the life to come. This world is not governed by the principle of reward and punishment; on the contrary, it is governed by the principle of trial and test. Here the Almighty has given respite to evil as well together with the truth. To realize their desires, they have regarded evil as their religion and think that this life is all there is and that the attitude they have adopted is correct. They further think that the fate of which the Qur'ān has warned them is a far-fetched threat.

The antecedent of the pronoun بِهٖ in وَ ذَكِّرْ بِهٖٓ اَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ is the Qur'ān that is mentioned earlier in verse 68.

The word ابسله means "he was consigned to death."

Similarly, the expression ابسل فلانا لعمله وبه means "he was consigned to his deeds."

Before the particle أن, a governing noun to the effect مخافة is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles.

The expression can be translated in two ways.

i. remind through this Qur'ān lest a soul is consigned to death because of its deeds.

ii. remind through this Qur'ān lest a soul is consigned to its deeds or is held in ransom because of its deeds.

There is not much difference in both these translations in essence.

The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) does not need to go after those who are making fun of their religion nor worry about their ever-new demands. He should only discharge his responsibility of reminding them through the Qur’ān so that no soul faces punishment because of its misdeeds. His obligation is to warn people that in the hereafter everyone will face his deeds, which will either salvage them or destroy them. None will be there to help or support or intercessor. A person will also neither have any ransom to give nor will it be accepted. It is essential for the Prophet (sws) to inform people of this danger lest someone is punished in oblivion. If even after this warning someone still goes astray, he himself will be responsible for it. The Prophet (sws) will stand acquitted from his obligation. People who do not pay heed to this advice will be consigned to their deeds and because of their disbelief there will be boiling water and a painful torment for them.

“Boiling water” is mentioned as their first hospitality. In verses 92-93 of Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah, the words are: وَاَمَّآ اِنۡ كَانَ مِنَ الۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ الضَّآلِّيۡنَ فَنُزُلٌ مِّنۡ حَمِيۡمٍ.[51]

In order to understand the true emphasis in “and even if he offers every ransom” it should be kept in mind that on the Day of Judgement, the wrongdoers will desire to be able to give their children, their wife, their brothers and their family in ransom in order to save themselves from torment but this desire would not be fulfilled.

قُلۡ اَنَدۡعُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنۡفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلٰٓى اَعۡقَابِنَا بَعۡدَ اِذۡ هَدٰٮنَا اللّٰهُ كَالَّذِى اسۡتَهۡوَتۡهُ الشَّيٰطِيۡنُ فِى
الۡاَرۡضِ حَيۡرَانَ لَهٗۤ اَصۡحٰبٌ يَّدۡعُوۡنَهٗۤ اِلَى الۡهُدَى ائۡتِنَا ؕ قُلۡ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الۡهُدٰى ؕ وَاُمِرۡنَا لِنُسۡلِمَ لِرَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۙ ﴿۷۱﴾
وَاَنۡ اَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّقُوۡهُ ؕ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اِلَيۡهِ تُحۡشَرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ وَيَوۡمَ يَقُوۡلُ كُنۡ
فَيَكُوۡنُ ؕ قَوۡلُهُ الۡحَقُّ ؕ وَلَهُ الۡمُلۡكُ يَوۡمَ يُنۡفَخُ فِى الصُّوۡرِ ؕ عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡحَكِيۡمُ الۡخَبِيۡرُ ﴿۷۳﴾[52]

The implied meaning of these verses is that if these people were in error earlier on, they had an excuse. But now that the Prophet’s guidance had come to them, what excuse will they have?

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[51] And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of boiling water.

[52] Say: Should we call on those besides God which can neither benefit nor harm us? And we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us like him who is left perplexed in the desert by devils, even though his companions are calling him to the right path: “Come to us.” Say: God’s guidance is the real guidance and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds, and have been directed: Be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth. The day when He says: “Be,” so it shall be. His word is certain to materialize. The day when the trumpet is sounded, sovereignty shall only belong to Him. He has knowledge of all the unknown and the manifest. And He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.

The particle مَا in مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَ لَا يَضُرُّنَا signifies humiliation for their deities and the negation of benefit or harm relates to its essence. This is because if some benefit or harm reaches people through these deities, it is in fact because of God’s directive and not because of the deities themselves.

The words “even after God has guided us” also form a very effective advice for the addressees: those who stumble and make others stumble even after this clear guidance has come to them should reflect on their fate.

The word استهواء means “to make someone lose his senses and leave him bewildered.”

The word الْاَرْض means “land.” However, in the presence of some indication, it can refer to a specific part of it. Here since the parable of wandering about is stated, it refers to a “desert” because it is here that there is danger for a person to go astray.

Ascription of the verb to the devils is on account of the meaning of the parable. This parable relates to loss of faith and morality. Devils among jinn and mankind are mostly responsible for it. For this reason, by attributing it to them the actual reality is indicated. The word هدى also means “the straight path.”

The parable is of the earlier words “and we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us.” The implied meaning is that if these people follow them after they had gained access to the path of guidance and once again get entangled in disbelief and polytheism from which God had delivered them, then their parable will be of the person who was made to go astray in a desert by the devils; that person is left wandering about while being confounded; he is then called by his companions to the straight path but he has been left bereft of his intellect and does not know where to go.

Though the words of this parable seem general, deliberation shows that it is the parable of opponents of Islam who are under discussion here. In it, they are told that they are like travellers who have lost their way in a desert. Devils and misled leaders have made their lives miserable. Some of their guided compatriots (reference is to the believers) are calling them to the true way but they are not listening to their calls.

One can see how beautifully the whole picture has been portrayed. The parable apparently relates to others; however, in reality, it relates to them.

The words “and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds” are said in response to the invitation to polytheism. In other words, these people are inviting the believers to worship those things which can neither harm nor benefit while they themselves have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds. The word “to Him” is meant for emphasizing God’s command and the expression “Lord of the worlds” is the reason for this emphasis. In other words if God is the Lord of the worlds, who else can be worthy of being submitted to?

The words “be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered” are governed by the submission just mentioned and are actually its practical portrayal yet the address has become direct instead of the earlier indirect one. The purpose is to create emphasis in the discourse the way a direct address does. The prayer has been mentioned here as the foremost practical manifestation of the Islam mentioned earlier thus "and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds." The word here refers to abiding by all those limits that God has commanded to abide by.

The expression "towards Him shall all of you be gathered" refers to both the hereafter and to the oneness of God and it is actually an argument in favour of the above directives. In other words, being diligent in the prayer and abiding by the bounds of God is essential because one day everyone has to appear before God alone. On that day, there will be no protector or guardian except Him.

In other words, the verse "and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth" is a very comprehensive one that concisely states the argument in favour of every component of "and it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered."

The signs and arguments present in the heavens and the earth regarding the Creator's power, wisdom and providence bear witness to the fact that this world is not a place of amusement or sport of a merry-maker who has made it for his entertainment. It is, in fact, made by a being who is powerful, knowledgeable, wise, gracious and merciful. If it continues like this, the oppression in it is not redeemed through a day of justice, fairness is not rewarded, the evil-doers and the wretched are not punished, the pious, the truthful and the just are not rewarded, it will mean that this world is a meaningless and purposeless place. Moreover, this would mean that good and evil, justice and injustice, truth and falsehood are equal in His eyes. Human nature can in no way accept this. How can it be conceded that the Creator whose signs of wisdom, power, mercy and providence are found in everything that He has created does not care about good and evil, justice and injustice found in this world? If He does so – and definitely does so because in its absence this world is merely a place of amusement in fact gruesome entertainment – then, as a necessary consequence of this, there must come a day of justice in which the complete mercy and perfect wisdom of God manifest themselves and every virtue is rewarded and every vice is punished.

The words "His word is certain to materialize" mean that none should have any doubt that God will have any difficulty in bringing about the Day of Judgement. He will only have to utter just one word to make it happen. After all, when He had no difficulty in creating this world the first time, why will He face any difficulty the second time?

God is wise as well as knowledgeable. For this reason, the essential consequence of this is that all His verdicts be based on justice, wisdom and knowledge. There is no defect in His justice or wisdom so that He make some truth into a falsehood or vice versa. Similarly, there is no flaw in His knowledge so that because of a lack of it, He misconceives something or someone is able to mislead Him and interchange truth and falsehood.

Section VI: Verses (74-90)

The discussion that began from the beginning of the *sūrah* reached its pinnacle in the previous set of verses. Now in the verses coming up by referring to Abraham (sws) and to the prophets that came after him, it is asserted that all these prophets invited people to the same message as Muḥammad (sws) is inviting them to. After that he is addressed and told that he should nonetheless follow the guidance of this group of rightly guided prophets. If his nation does not listen to him, he should leave it to itself. His responsibility is to only preach and he is not liable to force people to accept guidance.

In this regard, the preaching of monotheism by Abraham (sws) to his father and his nation at the very start is mentioned with special significance. The reason of specially mentioning Abraham (sws) and his preaching, as was stated in the explanation of Sūrah al-Baqarah, is that both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites regarded him as their patriarch and spiritual leader. They also claimed that they were following his very religion that they had inherited. For their idolatrous practices, they would present him as their guide. Since Muḥammad (sws) was also sent from among the progeny of Abraham (sws) for this reason it was essential that just as it was explained to the Israelites in Sūrahs al-Baqarah and Āl-i ‘Imrān that the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity they have fabricated has nothing to do with Abraham's religion, it was also essential to make it evident to the Ishmaelites that the religion of polytheism they have adopted is their own fabrication; it is not the slightest connection with Abraham (sws).

Moreover, the lesson Muḥammad (sws) could have learnt from the preaching and every aspect of the life of Abraham (sws could not have been made possible in any other way. The reason for this, as has been explained earlier, is that Muḥammad (sws) was sent to revive and complete the religion of Abraham (sws) to a people who ascribed itself to Abraham (sws).

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ۚ إِنِّيْٓ أَرٰىكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ إِبْرٰهِيمَ
مَلَكُوْتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا ۚ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ
أُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَ الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَهْدِنِيْ رَبِّيْ لَأَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾
فَلَمَّا رَاَ الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ هٰذَآ أَكْبَرُ ۚ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ إِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِنِّيْ وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ
لِلَّذِيْ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيْفًا وَّمَآ أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَحَآجَّهٗ قَوْمُهٗ ؕ قَالَ أَتُحَآجُّوْٓنِّيْ فِي اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ؕ وَلَآ
أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ بِهٖٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّشَآءَ رَبِّيْ شَيْئًا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبِّيْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَآ أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا

تَخَافُوْنَ اَنَّكُمْ اَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا ؕ فَاَیُّ الْفَرِيْقَيْنِ اَحَقُّ بِالْاَمْنِ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوْۤا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْاَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَاۤ اٰتَيْنٰهَاۤ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ ؕ نَرْفَعُ
دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗۤ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ ؕ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوْحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَيُّوْبَ وَيُوْسُفَ وَمُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَ
اِلْيَاسَ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُوْنُسَ وَلُوْطًا ؕ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَمِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ وَ
ذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ وَاِخْوَانِهِمْ ۚ وَاجْتَبَيْنٰهُمْ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٨٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِیْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَ
لَوْ اَشْرَكُوْا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ
وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوْا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰىهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا ؕ اِنْ هُوَ
اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾

And recall when Abraham said to Āzar, his father: “Have you made idols as your deities? I am seeing you and your people in open error.” And, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction. (74-75)

Then it happened that when night came upon him, he saw a star. He said: “This is my Lord!” Then when the star faded, he said: “I do not befriend those who fade away.” Then when he saw the moon shining, he said: “This is my Lord.” But when it also faded, he said: “If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.” Then when he saw the sun shining, he said: “This is my Lord. It is the greatest.” But when it also faded, he said to his nation: “My people! I disown all those whom you regard as partners. I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists.” (76-79)

And his nation started to argue with him. He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? And I do not fear those who you regard as His partners unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things. Then will you not pay attention? And how can I fear what you ascribe as partners when you are not afraid of ascribing partners to Him for which He has not sent down any proof to you? So, Which of us two factions is more worthy of peace and comfort, if you know? Peace and comfort are for those who accepted faith and did not contaminate their faith with polytheism and only they are the guided ones.” (80-82)

This is Our conclusive reasoning which We provided Abraham against his people. We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire. In reality, Your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. And to him, We gave Isaac and Jacob. We guided each of them and before this, also gave guidance to Noah and among his descendants to David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron also. And thus do we reward the righteous. And to Zacharias, John, Jesus and Elias too. All these were among the righteous. And to Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot as well. And each of them We had exalted above the people of the world. And We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them. And We guided them to the straight path. This is God's guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses. However, had they too been incriminated with polytheism, all their deeds would have become fruitless. It was these people on whom We bestowed the book, the power of decision-making and prophethood. So, if these people deny it, then there is nothing to worry about because We have consigned this favour to some others who will not deny it. It is these people who were the ones guided by God. So, you also follow their ways only. Declare: I do not want any recompense from you for this. It is a mere reminder for all the people of the world. (83-90)

Text and Translation

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ اٰزَرَ اَتَتَّخِذُ اَصْنَامًا اٰلِهَةً ۚ اِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۷۴﴾ [53]

Āzar is the name of Abraham's father. In the Arabic and English versions of the Torah and in the Talmud it has diverse pronunciations. The way the Qur'ān has specifically mentioned his name shows that it wants to resolve this difference of opinion in its pronunciation. Since the Qur'ān is a guardian over the previous scriptures and is directly based on God's revelation, it must be believed that its pronunciation is the correct one.

A study of religious literature of the Jews reveals that Āzar not only worshipped idols, he also manufactured and sold them. It may well be that he be the chief priest of his temple. In such circumstances, the birth of Abraham (sws) to him and Abraham's crusade against his beliefs and profession is a manifestation of God's power. Amongst the signs of the veracity of prophets of God is the sign that the truth they invite people to is foremost conveyed by them to those closest and dearest to them.

The message towards which Abraham (sws) invited his father is only briefly referred to here. At other instances, it is detailed out as well:

اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ يٰۤاَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْكَ شَيْـًٔا يٰۤاَبَتِ اِنِّيْ قَدْ جَآءَنِيْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ
يَاْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِيْۤ اَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا يٰۤاَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطٰنَ ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ عَصِيًّا يٰۤاَبَتِ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ اَنْ
يَّمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ فَتَكُوْنَ لِلشَّيْطٰنِ وَلِيًّا قَالَ اَرَاغِبٌ اَنْتَ عَنْ اٰلِهَتِيْ يٰۤاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ۚ لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ لَاَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَ

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53. And recall when Abraham said to Āzar, his father: "Have you made idols as your deities? I am seeing you and your people in open error."

اهْجُرْنِيْ مَلِيًّا (١٩: ٤٢-٤٦)

Recall, when he said to his father: “Father! Why do you worship those things that neither hear nor see and cannot be of any benefit to you? Dear Father! In truth, that knowledge has come to me which has not come to you. So, follow me, I shall show you the straight path. Father! Do not worship Satan. Surely, Satan is very defiant to God, the Most Gracious. Dear Father! I fear that some torment of the Most Gracious God may seize you and you end up becoming the companion of Satan.” He replied: “Are you giving up my deities? If you do not desist, I shall stone you to death. So, get away me forever.” (19:42-46)

The words “have you made idols as your deities?” of Abraham (sws) are meant to point at the blatantly evident deviance of his people. In verse 95 of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt, the words are: اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مَا تَنْحِتُوْنَ.[54]

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَلَكُوْتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾[55]

The implied construction of كَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ is actually كُنَّا نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ. According to a common Arabic style, an incomplete verb is suppressed here.

Just as رهبوط is formed from رهبة, ملكوت as is formed from ملك.

The word ملكوت literally means “respect, authority and kingdom.” However, in the Qur’ān it refers to God’s kingdom that stretches over the heavens and the earth, in fact, over everything. It has repeatedly invited people to reflect on this kingdom. Thus, for example, in verse 185 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the words used are: اَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوْا فِيْ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ (have they not observed the system of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth). Similarly, in verse 83 of Sūrah Yāsīn, it is said: فَسُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ (so glory be to Him Who has control of all things and to Him shall you all be returned.)

Here it needs to be kept in mind that Abraham (sws) would reflect on the system of the heavens and earth and as a result God graciously revealed to him the secrets of comprehending this system which he explained to his father and to his people. It may also be borne in mind that by reflecting on this system one is led to true concepts and deeds. One is able to get hold of the real issues of life and its purpose. Does this world have a creator or was it being self-created? If there is creator, is he single or has partners? Will it end some day or continue forever? If it has a creator, what are His attributes and characteristic and why has he created such a huge set-up? Is there any standard for truth and falsehood in this world? Are human beings answerable for their deeds or they can do whatever they like and not be questioned? Are the heavens and the earth governed by a single powerful being's intent and wisdom or there are different beings vying for superiority? It is these questions and many others ones on the basis of which a person can have the right concepts and shape his deeds accordingly. For this reason, the Qur'ān has invited people to reflect on this system of heavens and the earth and has also guided them in reaching the right conclusions.

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[54] “Would you worship that which you have carved with your own hands.”

[55] And, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction.

As far as deliberation on God's kingdom is concerned, a scientist also does so; however, he does this by making his own self or his limited environment as its focal point. He is only keen to see his immediate benefit. Hence he does not try to reach the facts that could divert his attention from the immediate benefit he seeks. He looks at the blossoming rose of an orchard to make sweet sugar or derive other benefits from it by making some other products. After this, he does not care to look beyond to observe the wisdom, mercy and providence of the creator in the beauty, majesty, splendour and fragrance of the flower. He is not able to become so overwhelmed at this observation so as to be overcome with the beauty and the majesty of the Creator who created the flower. The fact is that for a man of insight, it is this aspect of a flower which is more attractive. He ponders over the question that if the purpose of a flower was to produce nectar, what then was the need for providence to carve out such captivating patterns and designs on the petals of the flower? Surely, this was done so that every petal of a flower could become a means to comprehend the Almighty.

Newton observed an apple falling down from a tree. This directed his attention to the law of gravitation. Then from this law many other laws were discovered that proved very beneficial for scientific research but human insight could not go beyond a certain limit. All applications and inferences of this law were confined to this world only. Otherwise, a question also arises here: who is it that has bound every single object, big or small in this law of mutual attraction? Obviously, the only honest answer to this is that all this has been created by a dominant and powerful being who is wise and knowledgeable. However, since these questions and answers entail very heavy responsibilities on human beings, our scientists evade them.

The words "and, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth" refer to the vision and insight which, by God's grace, is specially bestowed to his prophets. Other individuals too gain its share in accordance with their ability. These individuals are ones who honestly reflect on this universe and instead of evading the consequences of this reflection, welcome them. Verse 191 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān point to these people: وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِى خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالاَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذا بَاطِلاً (and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Lord! You have not created this without a purpose.") The coordinated clause of وَ لِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ (and become among those who have full conviction) is suppressed here in accordance with a common linguistic principle. This clause can be determined through concomitant indications. Here it is clarified later that God made Abraham observe His kingdom so that this observation could lead Abraham (sws) to the conclusive argument that there is no other deity except God; he conveyed this argument to his nation, as specified by the verse. Thus in the presence of this concomitant indication, if the suppressed part is revealed, the whole sense would be: "and, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction."

The conviction mentioned here is one step higher than faith can be called true and full conviction. Belief is a general thing which can be acquired by an upright person even through his intuition. However, conviction is acquired by reflection and deliberation and by observing and having knowledge of God's kingdom. There is no upper limit to this conviction. Thus further ahead [in verse 84] the words نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ (We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire) point to its high status. When this conviction is added to belief, its benefits become transitive and, at times, makes mountains and deserts resound with its blessings. Since prophets of God are deputed for the guidance of people, they have this conviction and after that those who follow them with full devotion.

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا ۚ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ اُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَ الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ
اَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَهْدِنِيْ رَبِّيْ لَاَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَ الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ هٰذَآ اَكْبَرُ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَتْ قَالَ
يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ اِنِّيْ وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِيْ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ حَنِيْفًا وَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾[56]

There is no difficulty in the style and or words of these verses. With respect to coherence, they explain the brevity found in the previous verses. Previously, it was stated how Abraham (sws) exposed the hollow nature of the religion followed by his father and his nation and rebuked them for their open deviance. Then while referring to it, it was stated how the Almighty would reveal the facts and secrets of this kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he can conclusively convey the truth to his nation and so that he himself also becomes among those who have conviction.

After that, it is now being stated how Abraham (sws) explained to his people how the very objects they worship bear witness through their own existence that they are subservient to God's authority and laws. They dare not the slightest deviate from these laws. For this reason, the being who is actually worthy of worship is the one who has created everything and not these subservient and submissive objects.

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[56] Then it happened that when night came upon him, he saw a star. He said: "This is my Lord!" Then when the star faded, he said: "I do not befriend those who fade away." Then when he saw the moon shining, he said: "This is my Lord." But when it also faded, he said: "If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray." Then when he saw the sun shining, he said: "This is my Lord. It is the greatest." But when it also faded, he said to his nation: "My people! I disown all those whom you regard as partners. I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists."

I will now explain the argument presented by Abraham (sws). However, before this is done it is essential to understand certain aspects of his style of address and reasoning.

Prophets of God in general are very similar in their preaching and its purpose. However, owing to the peculiar temperament and nature of their addressees, every prophet has some distinctive features with regard to his style of preaching and methodology of reasoning. For example, John (sws) and Jesus (sws) would generally converse in parables. The preaching of some prophets was more akin to sermonizing and others was couched in legal diction. This difference, as pointed out, is because of the difference of addressees. However, this difference also owes itself to some extent to the difference in temperaments.

As is evident from the Qur'ān, Abraham's nation was very inclined to polemical debates and argumentation. In the first instance, his people would not be prepared to even listen, and if ever they would, very soon they turned away from it and engaged in polemical arguments. It is because of this aggressive nature that Abraham (sws) would mostly adopt the way of gradual and progressive reasoning with them. In this methodology, he would slowly lead them to an unimaginable situation in which they would have no answer to his arguments. One example of this is found in the incident mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā'. On one occasion, he shattered all the idols of the temple and just left the large one intact. When an investigation began into this incident and Abraham (sws) was questioned, he answered forthwith that this seems to be the handiwork of the large idol. He also gestured towards the shattered idols and asked them to inquire from these victims because if they speak, they will narrate what calamity befell them. This answer initially embarrassed them and put them to shame. They thought how foolish they were to worship idols who cannot even defend themselves; and if they cannot defend their own selves, how can they defend the worshippers. In this way, their belief was jolted. Then in frenzy of their tribal bias when they did try to answer Abraham (sws), they even confessed their own foolishness. They said that does not Abraham (sws) know that they cannot speak. This confession provided Abraham (sws) with a very opportune moment to direct their attention to their foolishness. He delivered a very moving sermon and expressed sorrow at their naivety for worshipping things that can neither harm nor benefit themselves or others.

In this methodology adopted by Abraham (sws), he would also use a literary device called *tūriyah*. As per this device, in order to carry out his plan, he would give a statement that would be true but could potentially mislead his addressees. The result was that in spite of being clever, they would not be able to understand it before it materialized. A very subtle example of this is found in Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt. I will, God willing, explain it there and also elucidate some words which our exegetes could not understand and ended up interpreting them in a deplorable way. At times, this gradual reasoning methodology (*istidrāj*) and in this *tūriyah* is punctuated with polite humour – part of which is the natural component of these devices. This is because every task has a specific style. Another part of humour is also at times added to them since light and polite humour is also a trait of prophets of God. Readers will come across very pertinent examples of these in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt.

After this introduction, let us now take a deeper look at the verses under discussion.

One day, Abraham (sws) saw a star shining. It is possible that this be Venus or could be some other. He said that this was his Lord. It is clear from concomitant indications that he uttered these words to himself in such away that others too could hear them. When the listeners heard these words from him, they would have been very satisfied to hear a person who was very averse to the religion of their forefathers but was still following it to some extent. Abraham (sws) went silent after saying these words. Later when the star faded away, in exactly the same manner as before, he spoke to himself again letting others hear it too and said that he does not befriend those who fade away. The satisfaction which people who were around him must have left them on hearing these words. However, they must have thought that if this young man was deviating from their idols, it was not because of some whim, fancy or indifference; he, on the contrary, has reached this conclusion on the basis of reasoning. Moreover, since Abraham (sws) did not utter these words by directly addressing them in the form of a challenge, they would not have become aggressive too. In fact, they would have thought that maybe their own belief had some weakness.

Causing ripples in such a stagnant pond reflects great success. In this manner, Abraham (sws) directed the attention of his addresses to not just look at the shinning and rising of stars. He also induced them to think how they set and fade away. When they set after rising and go after coming and that too with such punctuality that there is not the slightest change in their direction, time and shape, then they by their very existence they show that they are being governed.

With this fact, another concept which Abraham (sws) injected in their minds was that a person's relationship with his creator and master is that of love and not mere fear. This is because mere fear is not something which creates an obligation towards it and that too of worship. This concept was also new to the Idolaters because polytheism is entirely based on fear. Abraham (sws) asserted that he was not prepared to worship anyone merely because of fear; in fact, he worshipped God because of love and these objects that are themselves subservient are not worthy of love. Love is something which can only be reserved for the being to whom they submit.

Then at another instance when a night was lit with the full moon, he once again had the opportunity to instruct his people. He then said the same words in the same style and tone that he had said for the star. Then when the moon also faded away, he addressed himself and while directing his speech to those around him said: "if my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray." Deliberation shows that Abraham (sws) took one step ahead in this instruction. Here it does not merely become evident that those that set or fade away are not worthy of being worshipped. What becomes evident is that to make deities out of objects that set or fade away is open error. What becomes further evident is that this error is not small. It is a matter of great sorrow and yearning. Moreover, it also becomes evident that the source of guidance is God alone. If He does not provide guidance, people can be misled by going after things on their face-value. Since all these statements were uttered by Abraham (sws) to himself, hence there is no reason for those who overheard them to get offended. In fact, those among them who had even a slight ability to deliberate must have reflected on the fact that on the one hand was this person anxious to receive guidance and on the other are they who were affixed to their place like a rock.

The words of Abraham (sws) "if my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray" express a fact. Guidance is only obtained from God. None can be guided if He does not guide. Some exegetes opine that this condition relates to the past; however, there is no need to over-stretch the mind to make this interpretation. Saying these words does not necessitate that Abraham (sws) was in error earlier or thought that he was in error. What has actually happened is that he has placed the mirror of his noble nature before others so that they can view their own faces. However, he has just placed the mirror before them without saying anything to them lest they may show aversion.

Similarly, one day he used sunrise and sunset a basis of his teaching. When the sun rose with all its splendour and it was midday, he said the same words about it as he had said earlier about the star and the moon. This time, however, he added the words "it is the greatest." It is very evident that he said these words in a sarcastic way to mock at them. However, the listeners would have still been content to hear this from a rebellious person. They would have thought that if he does not accept the star and the moon, then at least he accepts the sun as a deity. However, this satisfaction did not stay with them for long. The sun had to set and it did. When this happened, Abraham (sws) openly declared his acquittal from these deities. Until then what he had uttered was more of his personal impression to his own self even though its purpose was to indirectly awaken the conscience of his people. However, he had not addressed them directly. It was at this third time that he did so and expressed his acquittal from their deities.

The words "I disown all those whom you regard as partners; I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists" form this declaration of acquittal. The لِ of لِلَّذِیۡ in وَجَّهۡتُ وَجۡهِیَ لِلَّذِیۡ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ evidences the fact that the word وَجَّهۡتُ also encompasses the meaning of أسلمت in it. The implied meaning is that Abraham (sws) has devotedly submitted himself to the creator of the heavens and the earth. These words depict monotheism and submission in a grand way. Since in the prayer we acknowledge this reality, it begins with an utterance of these words.

وَحَآجَّهٗ قَوْمُهٗ ؕ قَالَ اَتُحَآجُّوْٓنِّیْ فِی اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ؕ وَلَاۤ اَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ بِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ یَّشَآءَ رَبِّیْ شَیْـًٔا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبِّیْ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ
اَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ وَكَیْفَ اَخَافُ مَاۤ اَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُوْنَ اَنَّكُمْ اَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ یُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ عَلَیْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا ؕ فَاَیُّ الْفَرِیْقَیْنِ
اَحَقُّ بِالْاَمْنِ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ اَلَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ یَلْبِسُوْۤا اِیْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ لَهُمُ الْاَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[57]

The declaration of acquittal from Abraham (sws) elicited a very strong reaction from his people. Since polytheism is based on fear, they began to threaten and warn him. They told him that since he hates these deities and has turned against them, he will face their wrath and anger. They will cripple him and strike him with lightning and he will die in a very horrible way.

It should be kept in mind that his people never denied God; they only associated partners with him. And this is not something specific to his people. No nation of the world has ever denied God. Whichever of them has stumbled, has stumbled in the manner of monotheism. In his answer, Abraham (sws) stated that he does not the slightest fear these hypothetical deities for they do not have the power to harm them except if God wills. These words showed his tremendous trust in God. In verse 89 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, this topic is discussed though the tongue of Shu‘ayb (sws): قَدِ افْتَرَیْنَا عَلَی اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِیْ مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ؕ وَ مَا یَكُوْنُ لَنَاۤ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ فِیْهَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ یَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ عَلَی اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا.[58] It is evident from this that God’s grace is needed for the materialization of the noblest of intentions. For this reason, a person should not say that he will accomplish something on the basis of his own effort however much pure and sincere his intention may be. He should express his resolve by trusting God’s help because trials waylay every path and His help and grace are needed to sail through these trials.

Abraham (sws) went on to state that if anyone has to fear God, it is his people and not he himself. This is because it is they who have associated partners with him without any proof. As far as God is concerned, he himself believes in Him and so do his people because this is an indubitable reality. If his people associate partners with

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[57] And his nation started to argue with him. He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? And I do not fear those who you regard as His partners unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things. Then will you not pay attention? And how can I fear what you ascribe as partners when you are not afraid of ascribing partners to Him for which He has not sent down any proof to you? So, Which of us two factions is more worthy of peace and comfort, if you know? Peace and comfort are for those who accepted faith and did not contaminate their faith with polytheism and only they are the guided ones.”

[58] We would be regarded as those who have imputed falsehood to God if we return to your ways after God has delivered us. This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends. And the fact is that the knowledge of our Lord embraces everything. We have trusted our Lord.”

God without any proof, then they are self-acknowledged criminals in the eyes of God. So, if he punishes them, they deserve it. Why should Abraham (sws) fear anyone when he has not done anything wrong?

The word ظُلْم in the last verse refers to polytheism. It is used in this meaning at many instances in the Qur’ān. This last verse expresses the true essence of monotheism. Only that belief in God is acceptable which is free from the slightest trace of polytheism. Faith which is contaminated with polytheism is not acceptable to God. His people think that peace is provided by their deities and are indifferent to God. The fact is that peace is reserved for those who trust God in all affairs and absolve themselves of polytheism. It is these people who are rightly guided and all others have deviated from the correct path.

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ ؕ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۸۳﴾[59]

This refers to the conclusive argument of monotheism which Abraham (sws) communicated to his people and whose details have just been mentioned.

It is clearly evident from these words that people who regard this anecdote of Abraham (sws) as a depiction of evolution in his thought and beliefs have formed an opinion that is against that of the Qur’ān. What can be said is that it actually depicts an evolution in his preaching methodology. Had it been the former case, the words “against his people” should not have been present.

Here some more things need to be kept in mind.

Firstly, prophets of God are born with a very upright nature and they grow up with this nature. Before becoming prophets too they have no doubt between monotheism and polytheism. Monotheism is the pledge of human nature which the Almighty had taken from every soul before sending it into this world. It is evident from the Qur’ān that every person will be held accountable before God on the basis of this pledge about monotheism whether the message of any prophet has reached him or not. Thus there is no possibility to even imagine about any prophet that before being summoned to this responsibility he was contaminated with any trace of polytheism. I will elaborate more on this under verse 172 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. I have also written a chapter called “The Real Reason of Polytheism” in my book *The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism.*

Before being appointed to this position, prophets of God are the best exemplars of humanity. In that phase of life, they do not seek God but seek the will and directives of God. This quest is a thirst found in their upright nature which intensifies as they advance in life and want it to be quenched. The rain of divine revelation then drenches them to quench this thirst. The status of divine revelation for prophets is not of light in

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[59] This is Our conclusive reasoning which We provided Abraham against his people. We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire. In reality, Your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.

darkness but of light upon light. More details on this can be seen in the explanation of verse 35 of Sūrah al-Nūr.

Secondly, the argumentation of Abraham (sws) drawn from God's kingdom and mentioned earlier is when he began his preaching after he was made a prophet and not before. He first invited his father and this precisely has been the way of prophets of God: they invite the closest to them the foremost and then direct their attention of their nation and gradually declare the truth before them as detailed out earlier. The proof that this incident took place after Abraham (sws) was made a prophet is found in verses 79-80. The grand words uttered in these verses by him can only be said by a prophet of God.

Thirdly, if this incident depicts Abraham's intellectual journey, then the sequence of events is totally illogical. Why did a small star attract his attention first? What happened to the sun that rises with such splendour and glory every morning? A more illogical narrative had to be fabricated to justify this illogical sequence of observation: it was posited that Abraham (sws) was born in a cave where he grew up; when he came out of it, it was night time and the first thing that he observed among the striking sights of this universe was the star Venus.

Fourthly, in this methodology of gradual reasoning, if the arguer accepts some premise of his rival, it is not to acknowledge its veracity but to trap him through a style of reasoning the rival is especially adept in. This practice of gradual reasoning which God has mentioned regarding his prophets in the Qur'ān also has this special trait that God seizes their rivals from where they think they are the strongest. If Abraham's nation worshipped the sun, the moon and Venus, what proof they had of their divinity except that they rise and shine. Abraham (sws) based his reasoning on this very aspect. He asserted that if their shine is the proof of their divinity, then they should also witness their setting and fading away. A psychological point here should be kept in mind too: the most effective time to express the transient nature of an entity whose temporary splendour was affording them divinity when that entity is lying vanquished.

Fifthly, tThe various styles and forms of reasoning and methodology adopted by prophets of God are all very natural and based on human nature. These include gradual reasoning, humour, sarcasm, using words and sentences with double-meaning etc. Each of these styles has its own occasion and place. At times, a pause which apparently is a stoppage is instrumental in carrying us through a thousand mile journey, and affectionate sarcasm which is sarcasm on the face of it surpasses thousands of arguments. In the last chapter of the Qur'ān (Sūrah al-Mulk to Sūrah al-Nās), these styles are discussed in detail,

The word دَرَجٰت is both a plural and is undefined too. This aspect has been kept in consideration in the translation viz. "ranks after ranks." This aspect has been referred to under verse 75 "and become among those who have full conviction." Precisely this is expressed here by saying that those people who observe the kingdom of God, their knowledge, comprehension, faith and ranks are enhanced by Him.

The attributes of God mentioned at the end are meant to refer to His established practice that He has prescribed for “His desire” in the words “We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire.” In other words, His desire is based on His knowledge and wisdom. He grants high status to those who deserve it and fulfil his rights and does not do so blindly. A very subtle reference is found in this that if a person does not use his intellect and innate abilities, he ends up prostrating before rocks he has carved out with his own hands and if he does so, then the sun and the moon, Venus and Mercury become trivial before him.

وَوَهَبۡنَا لَهٗۤ اِسۡحٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوۡبَ ؕ كُلًّا هَدَيۡنَا ۚ وَنُوۡحًا هَدَيۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَمِنۡ ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيۡمٰنَ وَاَيُّوۡبَ وَيُوۡسُفَ وَمُوۡسٰى
وَهٰرُوۡنَ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۸۴﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحۡيٰى وَعِيۡسٰى وَاِلۡيَاسَ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۸۵﴾ وَاِسۡمٰعِيۡلَ وَالۡيَسَعَ
وَيُوۡنُسَ وَلُوۡطًا ؕ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلۡنَا عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۸۶﴾ وَمِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمۡ وَاِخۡوَانِهِمۡ ۚ وَاجۡتَبَيۡنٰهُمۡ وَهَدَيۡنٰهُمۡ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۸۷﴾ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهۡدِىۡ بِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَلَوۡ اَشۡرَكُوۡا لَحَبِطَ عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحُكۡمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَاِنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدۡ وَكَّلۡنَا بِهَا قَوۡمًا لَّيۡسُوۡا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِيۡنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰٮهُمُ اقۡتَدِهۡ ؕ قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـئَلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ اَجۡرًا ؕ اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكۡرٰى لِلۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۹۰﴾[60]

The earlier verses depict the spiritual and faith related ranks of Abraham (sws) besides his preaching. It is now stated that in this world also, God made his message succeed and eternally prosper. Among his progeny, many prophets and righteous people as well as reformers and revivalists were born. All of them preached the same religion of monotheism which he preached and which Noah before him preached. The implied meaning is that it is this religion which is common to all prophets and Abraham (sws) too is preaching it. If his nation does not want to accept it, he should leave it alone. God has raised others who will be its bearers. Disregarding their

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60. And to him, We gave Isaac and Jacob. We guided each of them and before this, also gave guidance to Noah and among his descendants to David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron also. And thus do we reward the righteous. And to Zacharias, John, Jesus and Elias too. All these were among the righteous. And to Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot as well. And each of them We had exalted above the people of the world. And We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them. And We guided them to the straight path. This is God’s guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses. However, had they too been incriminated with polytheism, all their deeds would have become fruitless. It was these people on whom We bestowed the book, the power of decision-making and prophethood. So, if these people deny it, then there is nothing to worry about because We have consigned this favour to some others who will not deny it. It is these people who were the ones guided by God. So, you also follow their ways only. Declare: I do not want any recompense from you for this. It is a mere reminder for all the people of the world.

opposition, Abraham (sws) must nevertheless follow the religion of those who were guided by God. He should clearly tell his rivals that he is not demanding any remuneration from them for accepting this message so that if they do not accept it, he will be financially finished. What he is presenting before them is a reminder. If they accept it, it will benefit them otherwise they will face its consequences.

Isaac (sws) is the son of Abraham (sws) and Jacob (sws) is the latter's grandson. The verses say that God blessed all the prophets with the religion of monotheism and with the straight path Abraham (sws) is calling his people to. First, Noah (sws) is referred to. It is known from the Talmud that Noah (sws) taught and instructed Abraham (sws). Viewed thus, the generations in between were adjacent. In the expression وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ, the antecedent of the pronoun is Abraham (sws).

Here it needs to be kept in mind that all these individuals are celebrated prophets of the Israelites. Also common to them is that all of them were either kings or held some or the other position of leadership. The words "and thus do we reward the righteous" refer to the fact that they received this guidance because they were righteous. They were ones who correctly used their God-given abilities and thus were rewarded by His favours. In other words, this reward was not given to them because of their lineage but because of their attributes and character.

Zacharias (sws), John (sws) and Jesus (sws) are well known prophets. Ilyas (sws) refers to Elijah of the Torah. About these prophets, it is also said that God blessed them with the guidance of the straight path as he did to Abraham (sws) and to other prophets. They also preached monotheism and Islam and not anything else. It is further stated that all of them were from among the righteous. One thing that it evident from this is the same that has been referred to before: whatever they acquired was because of piety and righteousness. The second thing that is evident is that these were pious and devout individuals and none of them possessed divinity, as the Christians believed regarding Jesus (sws). Just as in the previous set of prophets political authority and leadership is common, ascetism, and austerity is common to this set.

There are two prophets mentioned in the Bible whose names are similar to al-Yasa‘a (sws). Of these, the pronunciation Elisha (sws) is closer to the Qur'ān. He prophesied around 832-892 BC. The other one is Isaiah (sws) whose period is 740 BC.

After mentioning Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot, it is stated: "and each of them We had exalted above the people of the world." Exaltation here refers to the responsibility of preaching God's guidance.

The selection mentioned in "and We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them" is to select them for guiding people and teaching them monotheism. The expression صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ refers to the path of monotheism and is undefined to enhance its import.

Consider the words: "This is God's guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses." The second sentence refers to God's established practice that He guides those who desire to be guided. It is then stated that whoever have been chosen by God for a high status will lose this status if they get incriminated with polytheism. Their chosen status merely because they were the descedents of Noah (sws) or Abraham (sws) will not remain intact. This admonition was for the Arabs and for the Israelites as well: those who after deviating from monotheism were dreaming of being the chosen ones because they belonged to the progeny of Abraham were living in a fool's Paradise. Not to speak of the fact that, had they succumbed to polytheism, their deeds would not have borne any fruit before God.

Consider next the words: اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ. The Qur'ān has mentioned the word *ḥikmah* at many instances adjacent to *al-kitāb*. Here the word used is *al-ḥukm*. While discussing this word in his book *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has said that it means "true understanding and to decide affairs in the light of this true understanding." When this trait develops into the form of a deeply rooted ability, it is called *ḥikmah.* Both *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* are essential consequences of being given the book of God. This is because the real purpose of God's books is to guide people in the affairs of life whether they relate to its individual or collective affairs and whether the situation at hand is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān or not. Obviously, in the latter case, an inference would have to be derived from it. Just God's book, *ḥukm* is His blessing and makes the book a practical manifestation of life. If the bearers of God's book are deprived of this, then the book severs its relation with the affairs of life and ends up being a mere historical document that can best be placed in a museum.

The meaning of the verse is that these people who are mentioned earlier are the ones whom God has blessed with His Book, His *ḥukm* and the gift of prophethood and they duly valued this gift. It is now through these gifts that the Almighty wants to bless the people of Makkah through prophet Muḥammad (sws). The correct attitude for them is that they duly value it but they did not. So the Prophet (sws) should ignore them. God has ordained such people to take up this responsibility who will fulfil it.

In the expression وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا, the particle ب in this is an indication that the word وَكَّلْنَا (to make someone responsible for something) also encompasses the meaning "to make someone a guarantor." The word قَوْمًا refers to the faction of the companions who had professed faith as well as those who were later destined to profess it and at the revelation of these verses had yet to accept it. These words predict the perseverance which will be shown by the companions and the abundance of the *ummah*, and viewed thus they form glad tidings for the Prophet (sws). They were given to him when he was passing through a storm of opposition. Evident from the words is the unassailable verdict of God that the preaching struggle of the Prophet (sws) will be successful. Also apparent from them is that people should not look at the small numbers in whom God has reposed this responsibility. They would be the advocates of the message, and those very drops would one day become an ocean.

In the words أُولَـٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰىهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ (it is these people who were the ones guided by God; so, you also follow their ways only), the letter ہ is for stoppage (*waqfah*). The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) should leave to themselves those who claim to be followers of Abraham (sws) but are actually following Satan and are not prepared to listen to the Prophet (sws). He should tell them that he is not demanding any remuneration for this responsibility so that they regard him a burden. He is distributing for free what he acquired free of charge. If they accept it, only they will benefit from it and if they reject it, it is they who will be among the deprived. He is preaching to them the religion of God and not doing trade or business with them so that if they do not buy what he is selling then he will be financially finished. It is God Who is going to reward him.

The antecedent of the pronoun "it" in "it is a mere reminder for all the people of the world" is the Qur'ān and the words actually further explain what has just been said. If the Prophet (sws) has delivered this reminder, then he has fulfilled his responsibility. If they accept it, they will see its consequence themselves. It is not his responsibility to make them forcibly accept it. The word ذِكْرٰى is used for the Qur'ān and alludes to two facts. The first of these is that whatever the Qur'ān was presenting was not something unknown or unique: it was a reminder of the realities ingrained in human nature but people had buried them beneath their desires and religious innovations. The second of them is that the Qur'ān was reminding them of the very guidance which was brought forth by Noah (sws), Abraham (sws) and all prophets. However, those who claimed to associate themselves to these prophets had invented some wrong concepts in relation to some names and then regarded these wrong concepts as the religion of their forefathers. Through this reminder, the Qur'ān is not only making them remember some forgotten pages of history but also some forgotten lessons of human nature. Thus whoever wants can benefit from these.

Section VII: Verses (91-94)

It is stated earlier that the monotheism and Islam the Qur'ān is inviting people to is what all prophets preached; it is the misfortune of those who are denying it. Now, in these few succeeding verses, the attitude of the rejecters is commented and the statements they gave to justify it are shown to be foolish. Those who led this campaign of rejection were the leaders of the Quraysh but since the very beginning, the Jews had started to secretly support them because they regarded the popularity of the Prophet's message to be the real threat to themselves. They reckoned that prophethood and messengerhood was a monopoly of their tribe and if a prophet was to come, then he will come to the Israelites and not outside of them. When they encountered the new Prophet from among the Ishmaelites, they wanted to stop this danger. It was not possible for them to become unbiased but they were not very sure how to oppose him. If they asserted that prophethood and messengerhood was a monopoly of their tribe and in the presence of the Torah, no other divine book was needed, they feared that this would incite the honour of the Arabs and it may well be that in this frenzy they would prefer to support the Prophet (sws). Because of this fear, they did not express what they had in their hearts but in order to further inflame his opponents they asserted that the Prophet (sws) was falsely claiming that God has revealed a book to him. They would say this with their specific mental reservation but because of political reasons, as referred to earlier, would not say it as a principle. Here the Qur'ān has exposed this prank here and also answered the arrogant Quraysh who because of being chiefs thought that anyone except them could also be worthy of status and honour.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖۤ اِذْ قَالُوْا مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى بَشَرٍ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ قُلْ مَنْ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِیْ جَآءَ بِهٖ مُوْسٰى نُوْرًا وَّ
هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ قَرَاطِیْسَ تُبْدُوْنَهَا وَ تُخْفُوْنَ كَثِیْرًا ۚ وَ عُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنْتُمْ وَ لَاۤ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ
فِیْ خَوْضِهِمْ یَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ هٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِیْ بَیْنَ یَدَیْهِ وَ لِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَ مَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَ الَّذِیْنَ
یُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ یُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ یُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَ مَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیَّ وَ
لَمْ یُوْحَ اِلَیْهِ شَیْءٌ وَّ مَنْ قَالَ سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ لَوْ تَرٰۤى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِیْ غَمَرٰتِ الْمَوْتِ وَ الْمَلٰٓىِٕكَةُ بَاسِطُوْۤا
اَیْدِیْهِمْ ۚ اَخْرِجُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ اَلْیَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ غَیْرَ الْحَقِّ وَ كُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰیٰتِهٖ
تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا فُرَادٰى كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّ تَرَكْتُمْ مَّا خَوَّلْنٰكُمْ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِكُمْ ۚ وَ مَا نَرٰى مَعَكُمْ
شُفَعَآءَكُمُ الَّذِیْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّهُمْ فِیْكُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا ؕ لَقَدْ تَّقَطَّعَ بَیْنَكُمْ وَ ضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

And they did not realize the value of God when they said: "God has not revealed anything to any mortal." Ask them: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for human beings, which you would show to them page by page and would hide most of it, and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew? Say: God only did! Then leave them to amuse themselves with their quibbling. And this is a Book We have revealed, imbued with great blessings, confirming what came before it [so that you may give glad tidings] and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers. (91-92)

And who is more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, or claims: “Divine revelation has been sent to me,” even though no divine revelation came to him and than the person who claims: “I shall reveal similar to what God has revealed?” And would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death and angels with outstretched hands would be demanding from them: “Hand over your souls; today, you will be meted out a humiliating punishment because you would fabricate falsehood about God and arrogantly evade His revelations.” And finally you have come to us alone as We created you the first time leaving behind all that We bestowed on you. And We also do not see with you your intercessors about whom you claimed they are Our partners in your affairs. All your ties have been broken, and whatever notions you had formed have turned out baseless. (93-94)

Explanation

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖٓ اِذْ قَالُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى بَشَرٍ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قُلْ مَنْ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْ جَآءَ بِهٖ مُوْسٰى نُوْرًا وَّ
هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ قَرَاطِيْسَ تُبْدُوْنَهَا وَتُخْفُوْنَ كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَعُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ
فِيْ خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾[61]

It has been indicated earlier that the statement: “God has not revealed anything to any mortal” is of the Jews. Though what they must have had in mind was that after the Book and the *sharī‘ah* revealed to Moses (sws), there was no further need of any Book or *sharī‘ah.* However, they feared that saying this in explicit words could have incited the national honour of the Arabs, as indicated before. For this reason, they gave this statement so that their purpose was met and no one should have any ill-will toward them.

While giving an answer to this statement here, both its outward and inward aspect has been kept in consideration.

First, the outward aspect that refers to the words used is responded to. If this statement had been given by the unlettered Arabs, they would have had an excuse because they were a people unaware of any divine Book. However, when this statement is given by people who were the inheritors of all prophets and all Books of God, then it proves that these people who claim to know God actually know Him very little. Otherwise, it is a matter of deliberation that the God Who has provided an answer to every need found in human beings, how can He not provide an answer to the greatest need found in them which is guidance. If He made human beings thirsty,

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[61] And they did not realize the value of God when they said: “God has not revealed anything to any mortal.” Ask them: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for human beings, which you would show to them page by page and would hide most of it, and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew? Say: God only did! Then leave them to amuse themselves with their quibbling.

He provided them with water from both the earth and the heavens. After this, giving the statement that He has not revealed guidance to any mortal can only be uttered by those who are neither aware of God’s attributes nor His blessings, which they have actually being enjoying since generations.

They are questioned that if what they say is really true, then who has revealed the Torah to Moses (sws). After that, by saying “which you would show to them page by page” their ungrateful attitude towards the Book of God is expressed. Secondarily, as a result, this also became an answer of the inner aspect of their statement: if they had said it to imply that now after Moses (sws)’s Book, no other Book was needed then they do not even have the right to say that. This is because the value they had given to the Torah was that they had written it page by page and would hide most of these pages and reveal a few. In other words, if they dealt in this manner with something which had come to them as light and guidance, why would God have left His creatures wander in darkness and not revealed a fresh guidance that would take them out of this darkness and relieve them of error?

The word قَرَاطِيُسَ is the plural of قرطاس and means “a writing surface.” It may be kept in mind that the Jews never compiled the Torah the way Muslims have compiled it between two covers. They had, on the contrary, divided it into various parts and had written each part separately. In this manner, they could easily hide the teachings and prophecies which they found against their desires and interests. When a book is written in parts on separate sheets and it is also in the custody of a specific group, then the group can easily conceal any part of it that it wants from the eyes of people beyond a specific set of followers. This was a very grave form of the crime of concealment of God’s Book and the Qur’ān has accused the Jews of it. It is also evident from the words of the Qur’ān that a greater part of the Torah had been concealed from common people and a lesser one had been exposed to them. It is evident from the words تُبۡدُوۡنَهَا وَتُخۡفُوۡنَ كَثِيۡرًا that the part hidden was more. It is thus evident that the part exposed was less. God provides His guidance and light so that people adopt the right path and not that they conceal it. Jesus (sws) and some other prophets of the Israelites have rebuked the Israelites for their attitude of hiding parts of the Book of God. Thus, he is reported to have said: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew, 5:14-16)

The sentence “and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew” is coordinated to the previous interrogative sentence. The implication is that even after knowing all these favours of God, they say that God has not revealed anything, then such audacity has no bounds.

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾[62]

This verse is an answer to the inward aspect of their statement that was hidden in their minds viz. why did God reveal a Book after the Torah and what gap did it fill? The attitude adopted by the bearers of the Torah with it has been secondarily pointed to in the previous verse. Now the absolute and independent status and need of the Qur'ān is explained: it is not an un-introduced book; its glad tidings were given to Abraham (sws) and its arrival was predicted by both Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). It has come in accordance with the news already given about it. Here the words مبارك and مصدق are used for the Qur'ān's status found in the previous books. The former word refers to the glad tiding of universal blessings given to Abraham (sws) that they will manifest themselves in form of the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) from the progeny of Ishmael (sws). It is stated in the Torah:

> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham (sws) from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis, 22:15-18)

I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah the blessings mentioned in the above cited words for all the nations of the world materialized with the advent of Muḥammad (sws) and the revelation of the Qur'ān.

The word مصدق means that the Qur'ān has come in accordance with the prophecies mentioned about it in previous scriptures. These prophecies (eg. Dueteronomy, ch 18 and Gospel, ch 16) have been cited in Sūrah al-Baqarah's exegesis. The characteristics of this book become evident from these prophecies and the need for which the arrival of this book was predicted beforehand also becomes known.

Besides the reason that the Qur'ān was a universal blessing for all, the other reason is mentioned thus "and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it." The Prophet (sws) should inform them that if they do not accept him as God's messenger and the Qur'ān as the Book of God, they will face a decisive

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62. And this is a Book We have revealed, imbued with great blessings, confirming what came before it [so that you may give glad tidings] and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers.

punishment from God.

This latter need of the Qur'ān has been explained with reference to the Quraysh and the need was such that it had to be fulfilled. The Quraysh were the leaders of the Ishmaelites and they mainly lived in Makkah. The Ishmaelites were a people who were not aware of prophethood and divine scriptures. The Almighty had promised Abraham (sws) that he will send a prophet in the progeny of Ishmaelites who will prove a benefactor for all nations of the world. The Prophet's arrival fulfilled this promise. It is an established practice of God that when He sends a messenger in a nation, if the messenger is accepted by it, then it is installed as the leader of the comity of nations. However, if the messenger is rejected by its nation, then the nation is destroyed because the truth has been conclusively conveyed to it. It was for this conclusive communication of the truth that the Almighty sent Muḥammad to the Ishmaelites as a messenger. About His messengers, God's established practice is that they belong to the nobles of the people they are sent to and foremost address the leaders and chiefs of their nation. Thus Muḥammad (sws) was born in Makkah which occupied the status of the central city of Arabia and was also the place of residence of the Quraysh. For this reason, Makkah is called *umm al-qurā*.

The words "and those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers" refer to the righteous among the People of the Book. This topic is also discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah and in other verses of the Qur'ān.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوْحَ اِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَّمَنْ قَالَ سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ تَرٰۤى اِذِ
الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ غَمَرٰتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوْۤا اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ اَخْرِجُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا فُرَادٰى كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّتَرَكْتُمْ مَّا خَوَّلْنٰكُمْ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِكُمْ ۚ وَ
مَا نَرٰى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْكُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا ؕ لَقَدْ تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾[63]

After the miscreants among the People of the Book, attention is now directed to the Idolaters of Makah. After briefly referring to the nonsensical remarks they gave about

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[63] And who is more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, or claims: "Divine revelation has been sent to me," even though no divine revelation came to him and than the person who claims: "I shall reveal similar to what God has revealed?" And would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death and angels with outstretched hands would be demanding from them: "Hand over your souls; today, you will be meted out a humiliating punishment because you would fabricate falsehood about God and arrogantly evade His revelations." And finally you have come to us alone as We created you the first time leaving behind all that We bestowed on you. And We also do not see with you your intercessors about whom you claimed they are Our partners in your affairs. All your ties have been broken, and whatever notions you had formed have turned out baseless.

the Qur'ān, they are informed of their fate. Since these statements were absolutely ridiculous and merely an expression of their arrogance, no response is given to them; instead, a fierce blow is dealt to their arrogance. The mention of these Idolaters begins with their greatest injustice: polytheism. By being incriminated with polytheism, a person usurps the greatest right of God and also commits the greatest disgraceful act against his own self. For this reason, it is called the greatest injustice. Moreover, it is a falsehood imputed to God because a person concocts it himself and then ascribes it to God even though he has no argument in its favour.

A further instance of imputation of falsehood is that some leaders of the Quraysh would say that the revelation that the Prophet (sws) claims to receive is also received by them and they too can present such a book if they want to. The purpose of this imputation was to do away with the impact the claim of the Prophet (sws) could have on the masses that he is guided by God through His angel. These fabricators would falsely maintain that they could present the words they receive through divine revelation but since they give it no importance, they make no claim. In verse 31 of Sūrah al-Anfāl, similar words from them are cited thus: وَاِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡهِمۡ اٰیٰتُنَا قَالُوۡا قَدۡ سَمِعۡنَا لَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَقُلۡنَا مِثۡلَ هٰذَاۤ ۙ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِیۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ.[64] It is a general principle that when a truth manifests itself, those whose arrogance is struck by it feel helpless against it. Then through such imposing statements they try to secure their position so that the common masses who have been deceived by them do not lose confidence in them and accept the truth. However, how and until when can such artificial show of courage and its proclamation evade reality? Finally, these boasters have to concede defeat.

On such instances as "and would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death" the answer to the condition found in these words is suppressed. This is because words fail to portray the horrific scene that is meant to be portrayed.

The words "you would fabricate falsehood about God" refer to their statement that they too received divine revelation from Him. In وَكُنۡتُمۡ عَنۡ اٰیٰتِهٖ تَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ, the preposition عَنۡ evidences the fact that the word تَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ encompasses the meaning of evasion. There can be many reasons for evading the Book of God. The most abominable of these evasions is the one done because of arrogance. Here precisely this is implied. It is a distinct legacy of Satan. It laid down very heavily on the leaders of the Quraysh that some honour or favour be bestowed to someone outside of them. For this reason, they would say that if God had really decided to make someone a messenger, He would have selected some chief of Makkah or Ṭā'if. The same arrogance exudes from their statements cited earlier.

The address from the words "and finally you have come to us alone as We created you the first time" has become direct so that the horrific nature of the fate referred to in "and would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death" is portrayed before the eyes. It is as if the Day of Judgement has arrived and they are being addressed in these words. They will become before God without any wealth or supporters or intercessors which they thought would be there to help them. The previous words also show that when a human being comes into this world, he is practically a lump of fresh devoid of all abilities. After that, God nourishes and grooms his personality and blesses him with means and resources as well as wealth and assets that are ordained for him. The purpose is to see whether he becomes grateful to God or shows arrogance. Then comes a day when he returns to God empty handed. None of the things he possesses goes with him.

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[64] And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: "We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients."

In the words تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ, the *fā‘il* in them has been suppressed. The actual construction is to the effect: تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْحَبْلُ. The reference is it to the intercessors who will not be there.

Section VIII: Verses (95-108)

The above section of verses concluded on the topic of monotheism. In this regard, more explanation is proffered regarding arguments in its favour in the succeeding verses. These arguments are drawn from the world around human beings and are stated in a way that they also substantiate prophethood and the hereafter. It is as if the whole topic of monotheism that is being discussed in this *sūrah* has been presented in a new style. Moreover, the right way – made evident by Abraham's reasoning referred to earlier – on the basis of which this universe should be deliberated upon is also brought to the fore. Then in this connection, the Quraysh are addresses and warned regarding their circumstances. After that, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and assured. Then the believers are addressed and given directives that relate to the situation they were in. Reflection shows that the content of the *sūrah* progresses in this same way: central theme, monotheism, hereafter and prophethood are repeatedly discussed in different styles. Then with relation to objections raised by the addressees and the attitude they adopted, the discourse moves towards refutation or explanation or assurance of advice. However, the binding thread never digresses.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَ النَّوٰى ؕ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَ مُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَالِقُ
الْاِصْبَاحِ ۚ وَ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَّ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوْمَ

لِتَهْتَدُوْا بِهَا فِيْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ
مُسْتَوْدَعٌ ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاَخْرَجْنَا
مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُّخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا ۚ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَّ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ
مُشْتَبِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ؕ اُنْظُرُوْۤا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖۤ اِذَاۤ اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ الْجِنَّ وَ
خَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوْا لَهٗ بَنِيْنَ وَبَنٰتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّ
لَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ صَاحِبَةٌ ؕ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَ
هُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْاَبْصَارُ ؗ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْاَبْصَارَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ اَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ؕ وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا دَرَسْتَ وَ
لِنُبَيِّنَهٗ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ اِتَّبِعْ مَاۤ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَاۤ
اَشْرَكُوْا ؕ وَمَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللّٰهَ
عَدْوًاۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۪ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Indeed, it is God who splits asunder the seed and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living. Such is God. Then where do you turn away? He alone brings forth the dawn and has made the night a thing of comfort and placed the sun and the moon with a measure. This is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God. And it is He Who has made the stars for you so that you may be guided by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained Our signs to those who want to know. And it is He Who has created you from a single being; then for each there is a resting-place, and a place of burial. We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand. And it is He who sent down water from the sky; then with it We brought forth the buds of everything; then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains. And palm-trees laden with clusters of dates and orchards of grapes, olives and pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different. Look at the fruit of each of these when it grows and behold its ripening when it ripens. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe. (95-99)

And they regard the jinn as God's equals, even though God Himself created them, and without any proof invented sons and daughters for Him. Glorious and exalted is He above what they say! He is the inventor of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He does not have a wife? And He has created all things and is aware of all things. That very God is your Lord. There is no god but Him. He only is the Creator of all things. So, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things. Eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes. He is very Discerning and All-Knowing. (100-103)

Insightful revelations have now come to you from your Lord. So, he who now shows insight will benefit his own self and he who remains blind will alone bear its consequences and I am not your keeper. And in this way do We present Our revelations in various styles so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them and so that they speak out: “You have thoroughly read out to us,” and so that We can make it fully clear to all those who want to know. (104-105)

Follow then what is being revealed to you from your Lord. There is no deity but Him, and ignore the polytheists. And had God willed, they would never have indulged in polytheism. And We have not appointed you their keeper nor are you their guarantor. (106-107)

And do not abuse those they invoke besides God, lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance. In this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself. Then to their Lord will all of them return. So He will inform them of what they have been doing. (108)

Explanation

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى ؕ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾[65]

The words حب and نوى mean “seed and fruit-stone.”

The mention of God’s signs begins with small things and then the larger ones are referred to. It is God’s power and might that is responsible to rent asunder seeds and fruit-stones and by making the extractions pass through various stages a plant is transformed into a tree. It is God’s power alone that bestows each seed and each fruit-stone with the abilities and potentials and then makes them grow and develop by ordering the earth, the heavens, the winds, the clouds and the seasons to play their roles and nurture them. In other words, every seed that grows from this earth, by its every existence, bears witness that it has come into existence by the scheming of the very being whose scheming has created the whole universe. If this universe was being governed by different gods and they would have been independent in their own spheres, not a single seed would have had the chance to develop, let alone the working of the whole universe.

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[65] Indeed, it is God who splits asunder the seed and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living. Such is God. Then where do you turn away?

The words "He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living" have been mentioned with slight variation in verse 37, where they have been explained. They actually signify an observation that can be made in every nook and corner of the universe. From the lifeless fruit-stones of mangoes and from the lifeless seeds of wheat, a luxuriant tree and a lush green plant sprouts, and then the luxuriant tree and the lush green plant become yellow and start to decay and finally wither away. The same observation can be made in human beings and animals. So much so, it is the same with nations and peoples: they follow a perpetual pattern of rise and fall. A nation suddenly emerges out of nothingness and dominates the whole world. A time comes when this very nation vanishes into nothingness. No one can escape this law of life and death, rise and fall. If someone besides God was also governing this universe, why can he not annul this law in even a part of the universe. If it is supposed that God does not even exist and this cosmos is a manifestation of matter or an unbridled power, then this manifestation should have continued and perpetuated. It should not have discontinued and no change in its direction should have occurred and it should not have changed.

Here a linguistic aspect needs attention. First it was said يُخْرِجُ الْحَىَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ; but in the second part the words are changed to مُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ. Thus it can be seen that in the first expression (bringing forth the living from the dead), a verb is used which portrays a situation. However, in the second expression (to bring forth the dead from the living), a *fā'il* is used which encapsulates the meaning of decision and intent. This difference of style in my understanding is that once life is acquired no living being is prepared to consign itself to death but such is the relentless law of nature that every living being must die. This is a very clear evidence of the fact that except for God, none has any authority in this universe. Had there been someone, why would he have not been able to defy dear death? In verses 86-87 of Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah, it is similarly stated: فَلَوْلَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ[66]

Generally people have confined these words to the age old question of what came first: the egg or the hen. However, it is evident from the aforementioned explanation that they signify laws of nature regarding life in non-living things and death in living things. Only God can implement them and none can flee from His grasp.

If the sentence "such is God; then where do you turn away?" is explained in the light of what is stated later in verse 102: "that God is your Lord", then it is evident that in the first sentence the enunciative (*khabar*) is suppressed and if it is inferred that it is a complete sentence (without any such suppression), it would mean that all this is a benevolence of God; then where do you turn away.

It may be refreshed in our minds that the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of everything; however, at the same time, they associated partners with Him. For this reason, it is said that the right ideology is that when all this is God’s creation and control, then people should worship Him and show obedience to Him alone; however, their intellect has deserted them: if they take the first step in the right direction, the next diverges from the straight path and the truth that had been gained is forever lost.

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[66] So, why do not you restore this person's life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful.

This verse though occurs clearly in the context of monotheism, but it also subtly points to the hereafter. This is because when at every step life emerging from the death can be observed, then why should wonder be expressed at mankind’s recreation after death. If after decaying and decomposing, seeds and a fruit-stones can once again emerge from the earth, why can’t human beings after being buried in the earth once again rise from it?

فَالِقُ الْاِصْبَاحِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٩٦﴾[67]

The implied meaning of these verses is that besides observing the feats and glory of the Almighty in the earth that manifest in the seeds and fruit-stones buried in the earth, people should also observe His splendour in the sky above them. Just as He creates a tree by splitting a fruit-stone, He also brings forth the dawn after slicing through the veil of darkness. It is then stated that He has created the night to provide comfort and rest and alleviate people from tiredness of the day. They become fresh once again. This automatically shows that God sends the day after the night that people can start again with their chores and work for their livelihood. In verses 9-11 of Sūrah al-Nabā, it is similarly stated: وَّ جَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا وَّ جَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّ جَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا.[68] The verses imply that if these people reflect on how the morning and the evening and the night and day appear in sequence, can they really believe that the one who brings the morning is different from him who brings the evening and the one who brings the night and different from him who brings the day? The fact is that all of them come and go at the behest of God. If the creators of the night and day were different, then how could such perfect harmony exist between them that the night would bring people the glad tidings of comfort, rest and deep sleep and the day would be a means of work and livelihood for them.

After the night and the day, the two great signs that appear in them are referred to: the sun and the moon. There is a law and calendar for each of them which they minutely obey and observe and not the slightest deviate from them. The count of days, months and years are measured by them and it is they which are responsible for producing various seasons. Moreover, in spite of being in the sky, they conscientiously and diligently, without even asking for any praise, serve the needs of

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[67] He alone brings forth the dawn and has made the night a thing of comfort and placed the sun and the moon with a measure. This is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God.

[68] Have We not made your sleep a means of comfort? Not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood.

those who inhabit the earth.

The words “this is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God” depict the inference that can be drawn from the vigilance shown by the sun and the moon. The style of the statement is such as if it is the call of every heart that reflects on the system of this universe in the light of logic and reason. Many aspects are concealed in this small sentence.

Firstly, the sun and the moon do not have any say in the divinity of God. They are like parts of a machinery fitted in their place by the powerful and knowledgeable God. They carry out the responsibility and service consigned to them.

Secondly, this universe is the not the battle-field of opposing forces and different deities. In fact, there exists amazing harmony between its opposite elements. This harmony testifies that the universe is governed by the intent of a single powerful and knowledgeable God and every thing that goes on in it is under His control.

Thirdly, this universe is not a place of amusement of some merry-maker. From its every nook and corner can be seen the testimony of its creator’s power, wisdom and knowledge. This further shows that the universe has been created with a purpose which is bound to materialize. Hence it is essential that a Day of Judgement come to portray His wisdom.

Fourthly, this universe is not a place where things are haphazardly dumped and scattered without any order. The fact is that it is the product of astonishing planning and everything in it has a set place. Every movement and rotation has a prescribed path. Every action that ensues does so under specific laws. Every freedom has restrictions and conditions that are known. It is quite evident from this arrangement that the Creator of human beings wants them too lead a life according to his directives so that their lives also become in harmony with the universe. This alone is the path to success. Under verse 5 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān, I will further explain this point. There the Qur’ān has also adduced prophethood from this testimony.

In this verse, the word تَقۡدِيۡر means “planning.” The attribute al-‘Azīz signifies His immense power and dominance and the attribute al-‘Alīm signifies His unfathomable knowledge that also encompasses His profound wisdom. This is because knowledge entails wisdom too. Also evident from this is that God is not part of this system of the universe. He is above and beyond everyone. His power, knowledge and wisdom embrace everything.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوۡمَ لِتَهۡتَدُوۡا بِهَا فِىۡ ظُلُمٰتِ الۡبَرِّ وَالۡبَحۡرِ ؕ قَدۡ فَصَّلۡنَا الۡاٰيٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۹۷﴾[69]

After the sun and the moon, attention is directed to the stars: by serving the inhabitants of this world, they bear witness that the creator has deputed them to this task. When people journey by land and by sea, they guide their ships and caravans like lighthouses and turrets. How foolish it is to deify things which by their own existence show that they have been put into the service of human beings by their creator. Moreover, in spite of being in the heavens, they are serving the needs of those who live on the earth. People should think that if the creator of the heavens had been different from that of the earth, why would He have thought of this help. The fact is that this situation shows that the same God governs both the sky and the earth. It is He Who has put the stars in the service of human beings so that they are grateful to Him and worship Him alone.

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[69] And it is He Who has made the stars for you so that you may be guided by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained Our signs to those who want to know.

It may be noted here that when Arab poets portray their travels by night, they mention the stars both with respect to the guidance they provide in these journeys and also by guiding them about various parts of time of night. In other words, they serve both as clocks and as travel guides. However, along with this, the Arabs also worshipped certain stars. Thus, Sirius (*shi‘rā)* has been referred to by the Qur’ān. It would appear in the Spring season. Similarly, some stars were regarded as bringing good fortune and others as bad fortune.

The word اٰيٰت in قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ has different meanings. Here it means “signs” and since every sign is a proof of the thing it is a sign of, it also means “proofs” and “arguments.” As monotheism is mentioned here and secondarily the hereafter and prophethood too are mentioned, it would here mean arguments and proofs about them. Because every sign of God encapsulates multiple aspects, it is stated in this verse that God has explained every sign. However, it is not stated what are the entities whose signs are being stated here. It has been left to the understanding of the addressee: those who have this curiosity will get the answer.

A subtle reference also exists in the word اٰيٰت. It has been mentioned earlier about the rejecters among the Quraysh and this will be re-iterated at the end of this section that they would demand a sign to believe in the Qur’ān. They would actually imply a palpable miracle by it. By keeping in consideration this mentality, it is said that if they want to see miracles, then God has stated signs that satisfy the intellect and the heart. However, they are beneficial to those only who have the thirst for knowledge in them. Those who are devoid of it will remain blind even if all types of miracles are shown to them.

At times a verb is used to connote its intention. For this reason, the words لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ would mean “for people who want to know.” This style exists in other languages too.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۭ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾[70]

After directing attention to the signs around themselves, the signs found within the creation of human beings and the means and resources given to them are mentioned

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[70] And it is He Who has created you from a single being; then for each there is a resting-place, and a place of burial. We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand.

The word اَنْشَاَ used here does not merely mean "to create," it also means to make someone grow and develop. The "single being" refers to Adam (sws) who is regarded by all divine religions as the father of mankind. The Arabs too accepted this reality.

It is said that the mate of this being was created from its own species and then men and women were scattered in the earth. Though there is a variation in their faces, appearance, languages and dialects yet all of human beings have the same instinctive and natural needs. This is proof of the fact that all of them have the same creator. He has created all these leaves and off-shoots from the same tree. There is an apparent difference and disparity between a man and a woman. However, the inner and outer aspects of factors of harmony that exist between them testify from their very existence that the creator and sustainer of both is the same. He has created them for a common purpose. In other words, they are asked to reflect whether all this has been created by a single God and is the family of a single parent or is it the creation of different deities in the form of scattered species each having a different ancestor.

It is on this unity of ancestor and unity of creator that God has founded the human society and has regarded those who try to dismember this foundation as criminals of spreading anarchy in the land.

In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā', I have discussed this issue in detail. Its very first verse presents this premise thus:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّنِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ تَسَآءَلُوْنَ بِهٖ وَالْاَرْحَامَ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا. (١:٤)

> O People! Have fear of your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from its species created its spouse and through these two scattered many men and women and fear the God whose name you invoke to seek help from one another, and respect blood ties. Indeed, God is watching over you. (4:1)

The word مُسْتَقَرٌّ means a resting place and مُسْتَوْدَعٌ refers to a place where something is safely lodged. Concomitant indications show that the former means the place where a person lives when he is born. Thus the words وَلَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ (and for you is a place of living and benefiting from means until a specific time) are used in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The latter word means a person's place of burial. When a person comes in this world, he has to encounter both these places. He lives the number of days ordained for him and benefits with specified means and resources. This life of a human being and using these resources shows that he is watched over by God and is in His knowledge. Once his life period ends in this world, he consigns his soul to the creator and wherever he is buried, it is in God's earth that he is consigned to. At God's behest, the earth will return what is entrusted to it. Just as the living place of a person is in God's knowledge, His place of burial too is in His knowledge. His knowledge embraces everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. At another instance, this aspect is mentioned in the Qur'ān with much more detail. Thus in verse 6 of Sūrah Hūd, it is said: وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۭ كُلٌّ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ.[71]

In other words, if after birth human beings receive the means and resources of sustaining themselves from God, why should they regard someone else to be their guardian and protector? By using the word مُسْتَوْدَعٌ for the burial place, a subtle indication is made of raising them up after death: it is said that when people die, they are not obliterated; they are in fact entrusted to the earth from where they will be extracted and rewarded for their gratitude if they had acknowledged God's favours. Others will be punished for their ingratitude if they did not duly value His favours. This mercy and providence of God is an essential consequence of His knowledge and wisdom.

The words "We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand" also occur earlier. This repetition shows that the addressees are very stubborn and do not want to understand and put forth the excuse that why is not a miracle being shown to them. The difference between "knowledge" and "understanding" is that the former relates to the intellect and the latter to the heart. Thus it is stated elsewhere in verse 179 of Sūrah al-A'rāf: "they have hearts that do not understand." This is a reference to the fact that God's signs become apparent to a person when he uses his intellect and his heart. When he becomes a slave to the observable, he is exemplified by a donkey which only understands the use of force. Here this too needs to be kept in mind that the intellect and the heart reach God through observation of the universe when a person has the ability and courage to look beyond the observable. If he confines himself to what is palpable and observable and all his efforts revolve around these things that are only going to benefit him in this brief span life, at times he may see a mole but is unable to see the mountain behind it. This is the ailment in which a person becomes a slave to immediate gains. The consequence of this is that he sees everything but understands nothing.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُّخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا ۚ وَمِنَ
النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَّجَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۭ اُنْظُرُوْٓا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ
اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾[72]

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[71] And the sustenance of every single living being on earth is God's responsibility. And He knows his place of dwelling and the place of his burial. Everything is written in an open Book.

[72] And it is He who sent down water from the sky; then with it We brought forth the buds of everything; then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains. And palm-trees laden with clusters of dates and orchards of grapes, olives and

Attention is now directed to the signs and arguments that depict God’s mercy, providence, power, wisdom and His oneness as well as testify to the hereafter. They can be seen at every step provided a person wants to believe in them.

The word السَّمَآء means “sky” as well as “clouds.” It may be noted that the verse began with the speaker not being specified and then it was specified as God. This has an expression of affection, care and providence in it and also a reference to the fact that it is God Who rules everywhere in the heavens and the earth, the air and the clouds. If the heavens were ruled by one power and the earth by another, how could harmony have resulted such that the heavens would rain down water and the earth expel its treasures as a consequence? Also found in this is a subtle insinuation of the hereafter. At numerous instances in the Qur’ān, the revival of dead land as a result of rain is presented as evidence of the hereafter. If this is possible, why is being raised to life again not possible?

The words “then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains” is mention of a specific form of providence after the general one. It relates to human beings. First grains are mentioned since they are commonly needed and can also be stored. People are invited to reflect that if they are able to benefit from these grains through such an arrangement, is some unbridled force doing all this or is it the product of a wise and powerful creator. Producing harmony and concord between so many diverse elements to ensure life can only be done by a noble creator.

In both parts of وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَّ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ verbs are suppressed. The first is a passive verb and the second, an active one. After grains, dates are mentioned which were the staple fruit of the Arabs. They are mentioned in a way that attention is focused on their trees, on buds being created in these trees and from these buds heavy hanging bunches coming into being so that man is able to behold the creativity of God found in their initial appearance until the time they ripen. Merely by reflecting on this creativity, a person can comprehend the Creator and has some idea of His power, wisdom, mercy and providence. The obvious reason of this is that people are able to have cognizance of God otherwise as far as the need of dates as a means of sustenance is concerned, it is not essential that a small fruit seed gradually become a large tree, then at one stage buds and then spikes come into being; after that fruitlings develop which gradually mature into fruits whose bunches because of their weight hang low and all this by its very existence invites people to deliberate on them. Our hearts bear witness that all this elaborate arrangement is for the reason that the secrets of God’s power, providence and wisdom are revealed to people. However, it is the blindness on the part of science that it can see wisdom but cannot see the wise being behind it;

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pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different. Look at the fruit of each of these when it grows and behold its ripening when it ripens. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe.

similarly, it can spot providence but not its originator. More strange is the case of people who see that from the birth of a date tree to its development and ripening all elements of nature look after it but they still foolishly believe that this world is the battle-field of many deities and intents. Even more amazing is the case of the simpletons who see all these arrangements of nourishment and also benefit from them but think that all this is merely to feed them and comfort them. This question never arises in their mind whether all this imposes any responsibility on them from its provider and whether a day will come when they will be questioned about these favours. It is as if they enjoy privileges but have no obligation towards them.

After dates, more fruits are mentioned thus: "orchards of grapes, olives and pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different." The purpose of their mention is not just to point to a few specific fruits for they are only mentioned because they were very common in Arabia. The real purpose is to inform people that they were not just provided with food but with fruits too. It is then stated that these fruits reflect God's providence, mercy, power, wisdom and generosity because each has different varieties which are similar to one another and others which are different from one another in appearance, size and taste. They should reflect that for their sustained existence, they did not need all these varieties for they could have lived with dry bread and water. Why then did the creator create for them all kinds of fruits in such abundance to people to savour their taste buds and provide fragrance to their sense of smell? The reason was that they see the reflection of the attributes of their creator in everything and then purify themselves and incite the sense of gratitude that is innately found in every human being and which is the foundation of religion.

In the expression اُنْظُرُوْٓا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ in accordance with linguistic principles, the word اِذَا اَيْنَعَ have been suppressed after يَنْعِهٖ. The antecedent of the pronoun in اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ is all things mentioned above. The pronoun occurs in the singular so that it points to each of these things separately and directs people to reflect on each of them.

The verse states that people should reflect on all the phases of each of these things that begin with their inception and end on their ripening. If they do so, they will witness so many signs of God's power, wisdom, providence, creativity, micro-management, benevolence and beauty that they will not be able to count them. They ask for a single sign and a single miracle. If they have eyes, each branch, each flower and each fruit is no less than a miracle. Even the smallest of things has thousands of manifestations of God's inimitable power writ large on it. It has been alluded to earlier that this world did not need all these marvels and majesties for its survival. It could have been created in a very simple and monotonous form and could have existed in this form; however, the creator of the heavens and the earth wanted that each and every petal and each and every flower reflect His great power and wisdom and His unfathomable mercy and providence so that man is able to comprehend Him. It is a great misfortune of man that, on the one hand, when he discovers a broken piece of pottery from the archaeological remains of the Moenjo Daro and Harappa, from the crooked lines sketched on it, he fashions out a complete interpretation and history of the art, culture, civilization and religion and in short everything of that age; however, on the other hand, such is his thick-headedness and lack of taste that he is not able to comprehend the wisdom of the Almighty etched in abundance on every petal in this universe nor is he able to receive any guidance from them.

In the expression اُنْظُرُوْٓا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ, the antecedent of the pronoun in اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖ is all things mentioned above. The pronoun occurs in the singular so that it points to each of these things separately and directs people to reflect on each of them. Here the Qur'ān has not merely invited people to reflect but has also guided them to its methodology.

In accordance with linguistic principles, the word اِذَآ اَيْنَعَ have been suppressed after يَنْعِهٖ. Since the words اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ were present after اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖ there was need to state the words اِذَآ اَيْنَعَ after يَنْعِهٖ. In this way, what was mentioned became a proof of what was suppressed.

The verse states that people should reflect on all the phases of each of these things that begin with their inception and end on their ripening. If they do so, they will witness so many signs of God's power, wisdom, providence, creativity, micro-management, benevolence and beauty that they will not be able to count them. They ask for a single sign and a single miracle. If they have eyes, each branch, each flower and each fruit is no less than a miracle. Even the smallest of things has thousands of manifestations of God's inimitable power writ large on it. It has been alluded to earlier that this world did not need all these marvels and majesties for its survival. It could have been created in a very simple and monotonous form and could have existed in this form; however, the creator of the heavens and the earth wanted that each and every petal and each and every flower reflect His great power and wisdom and His unfathomable mercy and providence so that man is able to comprehend Him. It is a great misfortune of man that, on the one hand, when he discovers a broken piece of pottery from the archaeological remains of the Moenjo Daro and Harappa, from the crooked lines sketched on it, he fashions out a complete interpretation and history of the art, culture, civilization and religion and in short everything of that age; however, on the other hand, such is his thick-headedness and lack of taste that he is not able to comprehend the wisdom of the Almighty etched in abundance on every petal in this universe nor is he able to receive any guidance from them.

Consider now the last part of the verse: "Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe." It has been stated earlier that in order to acknowledge a fact, it is not merely sufficient that it is evident; the first thing required is that a person have the intent to accept it. People have generally not gone astray in this world because of a lack of knowledge but because of a lack of strong and sincere intent.

Let us now reflect on the signs that are indicated in this verse.

The first thing that becomes evident is that this world replete with so much wisdom has not come into existence out of its own accord nor has it been created by an unrestrained force. The fact is that each and every speck has signs of profound power and unfathomable wisdom. They bear witness that this world has been created by a powerful, wise and cognizant being.

The second thing that becomes evident is that every element of nature – the sky, the earth, the atmosphere, the winds, the sun, the moon, light, darkness, winters, summers, spring and autumn – is solely governed by this powerful being. This is because in the growth and development of everything all these elements are needed in specific proportions. This is only possible if all these elements are under the command of a single intent that dominates the universe. This single intent through its all-embracing knowledge and wisdom creates harmony and concord between these diverse and conflicting elements and use them to further the collective purpose of this universe.

The third thing that becomes evident is that this universe replete with power, knowledge, and wisdom bears a strong testimony from every nook and corner that it has not been created for the amusement of a merry-maker. It is not a place where there is no distinction between vice and virtue, good and evil, justice and oppression. It is the essential consequence of this power and wisdom that a day come when God’s perfect justice and absolute mercy manifest themselves.

The fourth thing is that the favours, benefits and gifts that are placed in this universe for human beings by the Almighty make it mandatory for them to show gratitude to Him and worship Him and be obedient to Him alone. The essential consequence of this too is that a day come when everyone be held accountable for the privileges he enjoyed: those who fulfilled their obligation towards them be rewarded and those who were ungrateful be punished.

The fifth thing that becomes evident is that the sustainer and provider of this world has created it in such a manner that He has fulfilled every need and want found in human beings. Food was provided for hunger, water was provided for thirst, a variety of edibles were made available to savour their taste-buds, attractive sceneries soothe their vision, How then is it possible that His grace and magnanimity not provide an answer found in their greatest quest: guidance? It necessitates that just as He has provided nourishment for their physical being, He also provide nourishment to their spiritual being. The need for prophets of God arise as a result of this.

وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوْا لَهٗ بَنِيْنَ وَبَنٰتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ صَاحِبَةٌ ؕ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْاَبْصَارُ ۫ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْاَبْصَارَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾[73]

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73. And they regard the jinn as God’s equals, even though God Himself created them, and without any proof invented sons and daughters for Him. Glorious and exalted is He above what they say! He is the inventor of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He

These verses start of by implying that every object of this universe is providing the testimonies about God and His attributes mentioned earlier, yet such is the foolishness of these people that they have ascribed the jinn to be God's partners. It may be noted that the things which the people of Arabia associated with God included angels, jinn and the stars. Here, however, by mentioning the jinn the foremost, the Almighty has indicated the horrific nature of polytheism: what is the relation between the splendour and majesty of God mentioned earlier with this utter idiocy of equating Him with hand made idols of brass. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs would worship the jinn under the same ideology as held by some current nations that worship ghosts. They would assign a jinn or a ghost to various valleys, trees and hillocks and in order to remain secure from their anger would present offerings before them and worship them. Some jinn were regarded so dangerous that to remain secure from them, as will be indicated in verse 137 ahead, children were sacrificed. This heinous sin would probably committed by those parents who superstitiously thought that if one of their children was not sacrificed to please the jinn, the rest too would be killed by him. This superstition has commonly existed among savage nations of the world.

In the expression وَ خَلَقَهُمْ the و signifies state and it is in reality a parenthetical expression. Such was the horrific nature of what was stated that it had to be refuted forthwith: these people regard the jinn to be God's peers whereas God has created them. How can God's creation be equated with Him? It may be kept in mind that the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of the whole universe. In this respect, their polytheism was not just contradictory, they were blatantly contradictory: how can God leave the world He has brought into existence at the mercy of the jinn He has created Himself?

Consider the sentence: وَ خَرَقُوْا لَهٗ بَنِيْنَ وَ بَنٰتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ. The expression خرق الكذب means "to fabricate a lie." The people of Arabia regarded the angels to be daughters of God. They would make their likenesses regarding them to be their deities and would worship them. Though primarily the superstitions of the Idolaters of Arabia are mentioned here, yet the Qur'ān by mentioning sons besides daughters has extended the scope of the discussion. In this way, the beliefs of those nations too have been refuted who regarded God to have sons. An example is the Christians. The words بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ mean that all this was done without any logical or scriptural argument. In verse 56 of Sūrah al-Mu'min, the words similarly used are بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ (without any proof that came to them).

As far as God is concerned, He is a self-evident reality of human nature and intellect. Without believing in God, neither is the enigma of this world solved nor do

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does not have a wife? And He has created all things and is aware of all things. That very God is your Lord. There is no god but Him. He only is the Creator of all things. So, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things. Eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes. He is very Discerning and All-Knowing.

human nature and intellect receive satisfaction. This premise is acknowledged by both monotheists and polytheists. However, whether God has partners or not needs proof and the onus of this proof lies on the one who makes this claim. This proof could have been of two types. It could either have been from God Himself that He has chosen certain beings to have a share in His divinity and regards them to be His children, or some argument was found in their favour in human nature and intellect. In the absence of both, on what grounds can this ascription be made and people become servants of many gods? God is not a matter of amusement. He is believed in because there is no other option. Moreover, what exactly is the compulsion in accepting others with Him? Without proof, a person does not even accept anyone to have a share in is property. Why then does he accept a share for some entities in the divinity of God?

The word سُبۡحٰنَهٗ is meant to express a lack of negative attributes. However, a very clear argument of monotheism is also present in it. It is an obvious requirement of human nature and intellect that no attribute should be ascribed to anyone which contradicts or negates any attribute which is established, universal and self-evident. If this is done, then its necessary consequence is that a fact which a person accepts is negated by another hypothesis he accepts. If someone is a king, then the attributes of a slave cannot be ascribed to him. Similarly, the attributes of an angel cannot be ascribed to Satan. Likewise, how can someone who is the creator, the master, is powerful and all-knowing and also noble and merciful be regarded to have attributes which creatures have. If someone does this, then he negates all the attributes acknowledging which is essential as per sense and reason and as a result of whose negation man is again engulfed in the darkness from which the light of God's attributes had led him out. If after accepting God as God, the jinn and the angels are regarded to be His associates, then how can He still be God? Then His peers and equals also exist and both His partners and rivals come into being.

Consider now the expression: بَدِيۡعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ. The word بَدِيۡع means "to bring something into existence out of nothingness." The expression means that God has created the heavens and the earth from nothingness. In other words, when there was nothing, God still existed and this is a universally acknowledged reality. It means that every object of this universe is a creation of God. When this is so, how can it be equated in status to Him? How can they have a share in His divinity?

The verse "How can He have children when He does not have a wife?" implies that ascribing children to God opens the way to an even greater foolish concept. It may be noted that in spite of their nonsensical notions of polytheism, the Idolaters of Arabia never regarded God to have a wife. That is precisely what the Qur'ān has raised this question. If this cannot be denied, then all that exists is His creation and this ascription is rendered totally baseless.

The sentence "and He has created all things and is aware of all things" is the proof for complete negation of associate of God and of polytheism. In other words, when

God has created everything and His all knowledge is all-embracing, then what is the need for Him to seek help from partners? There is no possibility to accept that fact that God has created everything but He is not aware of what He has created. The creator necessarily knows everything. Thus in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Mulk, it is stated: أَلَا يَعلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ (would He not know Who has created?) Here it may be kept in mind that if the Arabs worshipped the angels by regarding them to be the daughters of God, it was not because they regarded them to be creators; they only regarded them to be favoured ones of God who inform Him of the desires and needs of those who worshipped them and secure these things from Him.

The words “He only is the Creator of all things; so, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things” that He watches over everything and thus all hopes and fears should be pinned on Him.

The words “eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes” are meant to sound an assurance. A ḥadīth depicts this very meaning thus:[74] تَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لم تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فإنه يَرَاكَ(worship God as if you see Him; if you do not see Him, He nevertheless sees you). It may be kept in mind that one of the reasons for polytheism since the very start is that the naïve wanted to see God in some palpable form. It is this notion that has produced mediators between God and human beings. When they could not see God with their eyes, the foolish fashioned idols of these entities and began worshipping them by regarding these idols to be a manifestation of God’s being, attributes or His avatar. Thus modern Hindu philosophers today present this new argument in favour of idol worship. I am also struck with wonder to observe that the Sufis of Indo-Pak who have clung to the religious innovation of having a shaykh (guru), also present this same argument in favour of their innovation. They say that since human beings are desirous of a palpable entity, having a shaykh is a means to have a palpable presence of God. The Qur’ān has dispelled this misconception here that God is not someone who can be observed or touched. One is near or distant from Him through one’s heart. If a person keeps God in remembrance, he becomes closer to Him and vice versa. If a person’s eyes are not able to see Him, it does not matter; the eyes of God see him at all times wherever he is and this is sufficient for a person’s trust in Him.

The sentence “He is very Discerning and All-Knowing” corroborates what is just said. Nothing whatsoever is hidden from Him. In other words, He does not need any means and mediators. If people seek Him, they will be sought by Him. Their eyes might not be able to see Him but they are seen by His eyes everywhere.

قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ اَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ؕ وَمَآ اَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ

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[74] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 27, (no. 50).

الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهٗ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾[75]

The word بصيرة is used in the Qur'ān to imply insight and also arguments that produce insight. Here it is used in this second meaning and refers to the verses of the Qur'ān that can potentially lift the veil from the eyes provided people are prepared to open them.

It is evident from the words "and I am not your keeper" are directly from the tongue of the Prophet (sws). It has not been said: "Tell these people ...." What needed to be said was stated by the Prophet (sws) himself. This style of revelation shows proximity of the soul of a prophet to the divine. It is as if God is speaking from his tongue.

The expression "and in this way" in "and in this way do We present Our revelations" refers to the earlier arguments presented in favour of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter.

Consider the expression: وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا دَرَسْتَ. The word درس means to erase and rub away. درس الرسم would mean that "he erased the sign." When a person repeatedly reads a book particularly while placing a finger on the text, as is the convention in reading religious texts, the lines get dimmed. For this reason, this word came to connote reading something very thoroughly and memorizing it.

Reading a book can be for one's self and also for reading it out to others. Thus the words قرأة and تلاوة are used in both these meanings by the Qur'ān.

In accordance with linguistic principles of Arabic, the copulative clause of وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا is suppressed. The overall meaning of the verse would be: "We present our revelations in different styles and aspects so that if they want, they may understand them and if they persist in their attitude, then at least they do acknowledge that the Prophet (sws) has thoroughly read out to them." Moreover, the Almighty is explaining everything so that those who are desirous of knowledge can acquire knowledge from them.

It should be kept in mind that when the Almighty sends a messenger to a nation that messenger conclusively conveys the truth to it. So much so, their hearts speak out that the messenger has done what best could have been done to convey the truth whether they acknowledge this from their tongue or not. Here "so that they speak out" actually refers to what they say on their hearts.

A nation which, in spite of acknowledging a truth in its heart, adamantly persists in denying the messenger through its words and deeds is destroyed in accordance with God's established practice.

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[75] Insightful revelations have now come to you from your Lord. So, he who now shows insight will benefit his own self and he who remains blind will alone bear its consequences and I am not your keeper. And in this way do We present Our revelations in various styles so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them and so that they speak out: "You have thoroughly read out to us," and so that We can make it fully clear to all those who want to know.

اِتَّبِعْ مَاۤ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَاۤ اَشْرَكُوْا ؕ وَمَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَیْهِمْ
حَفِیْظًا ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنْتَ عَلَیْهِمْ بِوَكِیْلٍ ﴿۱۰۷﴾[76]

These verses are directed to the Prophet (sws). Besides following what is stated, he should remember that had God's wisdom entailed he would have given people the choice to accept whatever religion they wanted to. So, the Prophet (sws) should not be worry in this matter. His sole responsibility is to communicate the truth and this is precisely what he is doing. He is not responsible or accountable before God for their faith. He should leave them to do what they want to. If they do not fulfil their responsibility, they will bear its consequences.

The word وكيل here means "guarantor." In other words, when God has neither made the Prophet (sws) their keeper nor is he their guarantor, why should he worry about them?

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِیْنَ یَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَیَسُبُّوا اللّٰهَ عَدْوًۢا بِغَیْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زَیَّنَّا لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۪ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّهِمْ
مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَیُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾[77]

This is a very apt on the spot directive to the believers. It is similar to the one mentioned in verses 86 and 148 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. The context of both these verses is that the attitude of the hypocrites was severely criticized. After that, the believers were told that in spite of this criticism, they must not break communication with them or stop greeting them in the ceremonial; similarly, they must not also say harsh words to specific individuals lest the matter becomes personal. In the verse under discussion too, a similar pattern has been adopted. After severely criticizing polytheism and polytheists, it was deemed appropriate that the believers be told that their refutation of polytheism should not become so vehement that the zealous among them start to abuse their deities. This directive was essential also because the phase the believers were passing through was one of intense debate, as will become evident from subsequent verses. It was quite possible that in the heat of discussion, believers cross the limits even though it is imperative for the believers to not transgress bounds even while dealing with their enemy, as is referred to in verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

The second important aspect of this directive is that what is more blessed and consequential in the case of preaching is that discussion must be confined to foundational beliefs are discussed so that the addressees are not given a chance to express their violent bias. It can be proven that monotheism is the call of human nature and polytheism in baseless, the divinity of these alleged deities will automatically be dashed to ground. There is no need at all to abuse them. However, if in the heat of argument people start to abuse their deities which the polytheists vehemently submitted to for generations, they could be psychologically cornered to say bad words about God in their frenzy and after that would never have been prepared to listen to any further preaching. The words "lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance" indicate that even though the idolaters believe in God but when in their frenzy, how could they have abided by bounds of decency especially when they are not aware of God's attributes and rights?

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[76] Follow then what is being revealed to you from your Lord. There is no deity but Him, and ignore the polytheists. And had God willed, they would never have indulged in polytheism. And We have not appointed you their keeper nor are you their guarantor.

[77] And do not abuse those they invoke besides God, lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance. In this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself. Then to their Lord will all of them return. So He will inform them of what they have been doing.

Viewed thus, it is evident that abusing the deities of the idolaters in pointless. If they are conjectural, what is the use of fighting with a shadow? And if they belong to the category of angels, prophets and saints, then there is no question of abusing them. In short, this attitude is against the spirit of preaching and also violates the norms of intellect and justice. And what is most important is that abusing false gods of the idolaters opens the way to abusing the one true God.

It may be noted that instances in the Qur'ān where the helplessness and baselessness of the idols is portrayed is a different matter. In the first place, what believers have been stopped from here is abusing their deities and not criticizing them. Secondly, the verse here refers to hypothetical or real beings which the idolaters would worship and call upon, as is evident by the words "those they invoke besides God."

The words "in this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself" allude to the fact that every nation holds its traditions and beliefs dear. Hence if these are openly humiliated, people become violent. In such a case, every critic must keep in mind that only those aspects should be discussed that are appropriate and that too in a polite way. The style should not hurt them.

Here the Almighty has ascribed the word "pleasing" (*tazyīn*) to His own self. This is a reference to the fact that it is quite natural for a nation to have a bias and attachment for its cherished things and cultural and collective traditions. If this does not exist, then national unity cannot come into being. It is what binds families, nations and countries together. In its absence, people become leaves scattered about by the wind. Hence, it has a certain place in human life which is a requirement of nature and as such should be kept in consideration. It should be checked only when it starts to deviate from the truth and should be checked in a manner that the necessary obligation owed to it is not compromised.

It may be kept in mind that the Qur'ān has also accepted the importance of the way of the forefathers. It has only demanded that only those things among it should be followed which are not against the teachings of human nature and God's guidance.

Similarly, the believers are informed here that it is important to cleanse the beliefs and deeds of people but this task must be done with great care and wisdom. Every nation is deeply attached to its traditions and this is among the consequences of the nature God has ordained in human beings. For this reason, it is essential that things that have infiltrated into human nature and are against it should be cleansed from it. However, no one should indulge in any aggression against human nature itself because it will prove counter productive.

If one reflects on the words "then to their Lord will all of them return; so He will inform them of what they have been doing" in the light of the whole verse, the implied meaning would be: the believers should not cross limits in their zeal of preaching; if in spite of being aware of the truth people adhere to their mistakes, they will be regarded as criminals; on the Day of Judgement, they will be answerable to God and the believers will not be responsible for them in any way; if this is the case, then why should the believers cross limits in their responsibilities? In other words, this is an assurance sounded to the believers much like the assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) in the previous verse.

Section IX: Verses (109-117)

In the previous section of verses, logical and natural arguments in favour of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are mentioned in detail. In the succeeding verses it is being stated that even after all these arguments, these people are still demanding a miracle. The Prophet (sws) asked to inform them that this is not under his jurisdiction. Only God has this authority. He can show all sorts of miracles. However, these people will not accept faith even if they see every type of miracle. This is because the real reason for not professing faith is not the absence of signs and miracles; their hearts and their eyes have gone wayward. Just as they remained blind even after seeing numerous signs found in this universe, they will still remain blind if several miracles are shown to them.

After that, assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) by referring to an established practice of God that is found in this world and which is faced by every prophet and every preacher of the truth: devils among human beings and the jinn necessarily embark upon opposing their preaching. This situation on the one hand distinguishes good people from the bad ones and on the other gives more time to the evil elements to do what most they can to oppose the truth.

Next, it is proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that there is no option for him but to follow the directive of God in the ensuing dispute. God has given His verdict between vice and virtue by revealing a Book. The People of the Book know that this Book is from God. Those who are opposing it are following Satan and in their matter the words of God will come true: in response to Satan, God had said that He will fill Hell with all those who follow him.

In the end, the Prophet (sws) is told to strongly adhere to his stance and consign the matter to God.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ اَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ مَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ ۙ اَنَّهَآ اِذَا جَآءَتْ لَا
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ وَ نُقَلِّبُ اَفْـِٕدَتَهُمْ وَ اَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖۤ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّ نَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ وَ لَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ
اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَ كَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَ حَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ وَ
كَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ؕ وَ لَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ
فَذَرْهُمْ وَ مَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَ لِتَصْغٰۤى اِلَيْهِ اَفْـِٕدَةُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَ لِيَرْضَوْهُ وَ لِيَقْتَرِفُوْا مَا هُمْ مُّقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾ اَفَغَيْرَ
اللّٰهِ اَبْتَغِيْ حَكَمًا وَّ هُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مُفَصَّلًا ؕ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهٗ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا
تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَ تَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّ عَدْلًا ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَ اِنْ تُطِعْ اَكْثَرَ
مَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ يُضِلُّوْكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَّضِلُّ عَنْ
سَبِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾

And while swearing emphatic oaths by God, they say that if a sign comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Signs are with God alone. And what do you know that even if they come, they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness. And if We had sent down angels to them, and the dead had also spoken to them, and all things would have been collected before them in groups, even then they would not have believed, except if God wills. But most of them are afflicted with ignorance. (109-111)

And We have similarly made the mischievous among humans and the jinn to be the enemy of every prophet. In order to deceive one another, they keep inspiring falsehoods to one another. And had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this. So, leave them engaged in their fabrications and this is because the hearts of those who deny the Hereafter are inclined towards it and so that they like it and so that they earn whatever they can. (112-113)

Should I find a judge other than God even though it is He Who has revealed this detailed Book to you and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been revealed with the truth from your Lord. Thus, you must never become among those who doubt. And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all. And most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God. They only follow conjecture and merely speculate. Indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided. (114-117)

Explanation

وَ اَقۡسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰہِ جَہۡدَ اَیۡمَانِہِمۡ لَئِنۡ جَآءَتۡہُمۡ اٰیَۃٌ لَّیُؤۡمِنُنَّ بِہَا ؕ قُلۡ اِنَّمَا الۡاٰیٰتُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ وَ مَا یُشۡعِرُکُمۡ ۙ اَنَّہَاۤ اِذَا جَآءَتۡ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ وَ نُقَلِّبُ اَفۡـِٕدَتَہُمۡ وَ اَبۡصَارَہُمۡ کَمَا لَمۡ یُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِہٖۤ اَوَّلَ مَرَّۃٍ وَّ نَذَرُہُمۡ فِیۡ طُغۡیَانِہِمۡ یَعۡمَہُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ وَ لَوۡ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡہِمُ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃَ وَ کَلَّمَہُمُ الۡمَوۡتٰی وَ حَشَرۡنَا عَلَیۡہِمۡ کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا کَانُوۡا لِیُؤۡمِنُوۡۤا اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ یَّشَآءَ اللّٰہُ وَ لٰکِنَّ اَکۡثَرَہُمۡ یَجۡہَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾[78]

The word جہد means “to try as best as possible.” The expression بذل جہدہ means “he tried his best.”

The disbelievers contended that if they were shown a miracle, they would believe that it is from God and the one who has showed it is His messenger and the Book he has presented is from God. It is obvious that their purpose in swearing these emphatic oaths was not what they outwardly claimed. It was part of propaganda against the Prophet (sws). By this, on the one hand, they wanted to mislead the masses who were being impacted by his veracity; they surmised that if this simple demand from them was met, they would believe in him. On the other hand, they wanted to influence the upright believers that if he was a true messenger of God, what is hindering him in fulfilling this demand for if he does it, they will accept faith.

The answer given at this precarious juncture is true to the core and disregards the fact that these believers may make fun of it: only God has the authority to show miracles and not the Prophet (sws). His responsibility is it to only deliver warnings and glad tidings.

The addressed pronoun in وَمَا یُشۡعِرُکُمۡ is in the plural and the address is directed at the common Muslims. When matters reached this peak in the heat of discussion, it was but natural for them to think that a miracle would now be shown. They were told that this will not be so; whatever miracle is shown, the disbelievers will still be adamant on their denial. This is because the real reason of their denial will still stand even if

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[78] And while swearing emphatic oaths by God, they say that if a sign comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Signs are with God alone. And what do you know that even if they come, they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness. And if We had sent down angels to them, and the dead had also spoken to them, and all things would have been collected before them in groups, even then they would not have believed, except if God wills. But most of them are afflicted with ignorance.

they are shown a miracle.

The words "and We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time" point to God's established practice regarding blessing someone with the urge to accept faith: those who reflect on the innumerable signs found within and around themselves and whole-heartedly accept the conclusions which this reflection entails are blessed with the urge to accept faith. On the other hand, the eyes and hearts of those who persist in their blindness even after observing all these signs are made to turn away from the truth. After that, the greatest of miracles does not impact them. It is the law of God that those that look in crooked directions instead of looking straight and tread the wrong path instead of the right one are made to end up with crooked hearts and ideologies. Then like squint-eyed people they are only able to see everything from their own angle. This established practice of God is mentioned in the Qur'ān in the words: (٥:٦١) فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ (so, when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray 61:5)). Here, in the verse under discussion, this very established practice of God is referred to and Muslims are questioned as to how they think that if these people are shown a miracle on their demand, they will accept faith; after all, all these signs are found around people and within them – which the Qur'ān has emphatically pinpointed and explained their arguments and insinuations. When none of these was able to set right the approach of their hearts and eyes, how can a new sign change them? How can the veil which stretches across them today be removed tomorrow and where will the blindness that obstructs them to see today go away when a sign manifests itself? They are bound to deny this sign the way they have been denying other signs. On that day too their hearts and eyes will deny the truth the way they are doing today. This situation transpires as a result of God's established practice. For this reason, just as at some instances, the verb "leading astray" is ascribed to God, the act of turning away eyes and hearts is also ascribed to Him. The antecedent of the pronoun in لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ is the Qur'ān.

It is evident from the words "and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness" that their real reason of not accepting faith is their rebelliousness. They regarded God's favours to be a result of their own efforts and the preaching of God's messenger was striking a blow at their arrogance of being leaders. The punishment for this arrogance was that their eyes and hearts were turned away from the truth and they were left by God to wander in their rebelliousness.

The word قبل can be a verbal noun which means "to see someone come from in front" and it can also be the plural of قبيل which means "a group" or "a party." Examples of both these meanings exist. For the first, verse 55 of Sūrah al-Kahf can be seen: وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ الْهُدٰى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا.[79] For the second, verse 93 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl can be cited: اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ قَبِيْلًا.[80] Though both meanings are appropriate, I have preferred the second meaning keeping in view the words حَشَرْنَا and كُلَّ شَيْءٍ.

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[79] And after guidance has come to people, the only thing stopping them from accepting faith and seeking forgiveness from their Lord is that the fate met by the previous ones also

It is evident from the words “except if God wills; but most of them are afflicted with ignorance” that the only way these people will accept faith is that God gives them the urge to do so and this does not happen without His wisdom coming into play. He does not force people to accept faith. He gives this gift of faith to those who value it and for this use those faculties and potentials that are innately found in them. When they use them, they are further blessed with the urge to accept faith. As for those who want to profess faith, they are becoming blind because of being overwhelmed with their desires. How can they accept faith?

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَلِتَصْغٰۤى اِلَيْهِ اَفْـِٕدَةُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوْا مَا هُمْ مُّقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾[81]

The word “similarly” points to the hostile attitude adopted by the Quraysh and their allies in those times against the Prophet (sws). This verse assures him that he is not the only prophet to face such a situation. All prophets before him faced it. It becomes a means of trial for the upright and their potentials blossom and gives evil elements the chance to work their mischief so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth. This topic is discussed in verse 122 ahead in these words: اَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَاَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهٗ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِيْ بِهٖ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهٗ فِي الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ.[82] Since this test of the righteous and the respite given to the wicked takes place as a result of God’s grand scheme of trial, and is actually a necessary consequence of the freedom of choice given to human beings, it has been ascribed to God.

The word زُخْرُف means “something deceptive” or “something which is false but an attempt is made to coat it with the truth.” In the expression زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ, the adjective is

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manifests for them or the torment appears from in front them.

[80] Or unless you bring God and His angels to stand before us.

[81] And We have similarly made the mischievous among humans and the jinn to be the enemy of every prophet. In order to deceive one another, they keep inspiring falsehoods to one another. And had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this. So, leave them engaged in their fabrications and this is because the hearts of those who deny the Hereafter are inclined towards it and so that they like it and so that they earn whatever they can.

[82] Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them.

annexed to the noun it qualifies. It refers to those polytheistic innovations which have been invented in every era by the collusion of devils among men and jinn; they would then label these as the *sharī'ah* and give them currency in the society. When the prophets of God and the righteous called upon them to correct them, they began to dispute and debate with them. Thus, at this instance too, nothing different happened. When the Prophet (sws) called them to monotheism and pointed out the baselessness of the things they had prohibited on the basis of their idols and idolatrous beliefs, these leaders of polytheism rose up against him in antagonism. They tried to lead astray all those who they could inveigle and tried to convince the masses that Muḥammad (sws) was trying to lead them away from the religion of their forefathers and from the ways of Abraham (sws).

It does not need any explanation to understand that the system of evil and polytheistic beliefs exists in this world because of connivance between the devils found among the jinn and human beings. The greatest malice which Satan has is for monotheism. For this reason, he continues to strike it from angles through ever-new ploys. Those among human beings who are misled by him are afflicted with wrong beliefs and they become his instruments to mislead others, as stated in verse 122 ahead. Verse 128 further explains this collusion.

The words "and had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this" refers to the fact that whatever is happening is happening because of God's will and his law of trial. He has given both the jinn and human beings the choice to accept good or evil. He could have made every tread the path of virtue but His wisdom entailed that there should not be any compulsion in this matter and people be given the choice to accept good or evil. Under this law, the evil find respite of a few days to tread on the path they want to. The Prophet (sws) is told that he should tread his path and invite people towards it. He should leave to themselves those who do not want to hear him and want to remain in their self-created innovations. They will see their fate themselves. In the Qur'ān, the word افتراء is used for polytheism and religious innovations.

The co-ordinated clause of وَلِتَصْغٰىٓ اِلَيْهِ is suppressed and the attribute of Satan's followers is described by the words: الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ. It is evident from this that the appeal of the miscreants mentioned here is effective for only those who do not believe that they will be raised to life again. They are ones who only desire the luxury of this life. The word اقتراف means "to earn." In the Qur'ān, it is used in both positive and negative meanings. Here it is used in the latter sense, ie. " to earn evil."

The implied meaning of the last verse is that the respite given to devils among the jinn and human beings to oppose the prophets and the righteous and to try to lure them to religious innovations is to test the upright. On the other hand, the miscreants are lured away from the right path and they become happy and do whatever deeds they want to. This respite is the essential consequence of the freedom of choice given to human beings and thus comes under the established practice of God.

اَفَغَيۡرَ اللّٰهِ اَبۡتَغِىۡ حَكَمًا وَّهُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ اِلَيۡكُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ مُفَصَّلًا ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ اَنَّهٗ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ
بِالۡحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الۡمُمۡتَرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَتَمَّتۡ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدۡقًا وَّعَدۡلًا ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَ
اِنۡ تُطِعۡ اَكۡثَرَ مَنۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يُضِلُّوۡكَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنۡ يَّتَّبِعُوۡنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنۡ هُمۡ اِلَّا يَخۡرُصُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ
مَنۡ يَّضِلُّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِالۡمُهۡتَدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾[83]

This is the Prophet’s response to the debate started by the Idolaters. They were disputing with him regarding monotheism and polytheism and what is allowable and not. They are told that who else but God Himself has the right be regarded as the best judge in this debate. If surely it is His right, then how can the Prophet (sws) regard someone else to have this status when God has also revealed a book to them in which He has resolved all disputes in detail. On the one hand is this detailed divine scripture and on the other are their baseless traditions. What is more worthy of being decisive in this regard?

As has been explained under verse 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 20 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, the People of the Book mentioned here in “and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been revealed with the truth from your Lord” are the righteous among them who had testified to the veracity of the Book. If the ignorant among them are not accepting its status, the Prophet (sws) should ignore them; people of true knowledge know that it has been revealed from God to settle the dispute between truth and falsehood. In verses 52-53 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, this evidence borne by the righteous among the People of the Book is cited thus: اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ هُمۡ بِهٖ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ وَاِذَا يُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡهِمۡ قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖۤ اِنَّهُ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّنَاۤ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ.[84]

Though the words “thus, you must never become among those who doubt” are apparently addressed to the Prophet (sws), they are actually directed at the wrongdoers.

It may be kept in mind that when some truth is presented before people who have gone astray, it is not immediately welcomed. On the contrary, the majority opposes it.

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83. Should I find a judge other than God even though it is He Who has revealed this detailed Book to you and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been revealed with the truth from your Lord. Thus, you must never become among those who doubt. And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all. And most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God. They only follow conjecture and merely speculate. Indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided.

84. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: “We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival.”

The leaders and the miscreants of the nation oppose it because it is against their vested interests. As for the masses, since they are followers of their ancestral traditions, everything that is against these traditions is disliked by them even though it might be a great reality supported by convincing arguments. The behaviour of the majority at times inflicts hesitancy and doubts regarding this reality in the minds of those who though have pious intentions but are not fully mature in their thought process. It is to teach such people that this verse hints at and the next provides specific guidance. They are told that the veracity of something is judged on its own standards and if any external evidence is required then the evidence of serious, knowledgeable and morally upright people in its favour is sufficient however small in number they may be. It is famously known about Socrates that when some of his well-wishers cautioned him that all people of Athens are angry at his views, his nonchalant reply was that he just cared about one single person who was wise. More details are coming up on this debate about minority and majority.

Consider next the words: "And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all." The Prophet (sws) is being told that if today he finds all the devils among human beings and the jinn united against his message, it should be no matter of amazement. This is precisely the same situation as had been referred to in the incident of Satan and Adam (sws). At that time, he had been given the respite he had asked for to lead astray mankind. He had threatened that he would lead astray the majority to polytheism and idolworship. In response God had said that He will consign him and his followers to Hell. In verse 168 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, this aspect has been explained. Here it has been referred to show that by being lured away by Satan, they have made God's prediction come true about them. This verdict of God conforms to the standards of both truth and justice. In other words, what God has said is not only true, it is also just. This is because God has conclusively communicated the truth to them. If, in spite of this, they insist on following the suggestions of Satan instead of following the guidance of God, they deserve the fate God has informed them of. The verdicts of God are subservient to the established practice set by Him. No one can change it. God hears and knows all. Neither are any of His actions based on a lack of knowledge nor is there any chance of a mistake or injustice in them. It may be kept in mind that these words were meant to warn the Idolaters and assure the Prophet (sws). Readers may look up verse 34 of this *sūrah* to understand further the words "and no one can change His words."

What is stated earlier in verse 115 is now explained by the words: "and most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God." Though the address is singular but its sense is plural. The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest care about the opposition to monotheism and support to idolatrous innovations he is facing. It is not based on any proof or reasoning. It is entirely based on conjecture and speculation. The claim made by these people that they are following the way of God and what they had inherited from Abraham (sws) is false. It has no relation with both. None should be misled that the majority is with this erroneous view. If people start to follow this majority which is devoid of knowledge, they will necessarily be led astray. The clamour of the majority is no proof of its veracity.

The address in the words "indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided" is general. None should be misguided by the majority. People should adopt the path of those whom God is regarding as guided and abstain from the ones he is regarding as misguided. These words not only form glad tidings for the guided, they are also a warning for those who are errant. This is because when God is fully aware of both groups, He will deal with them accordingly. The claims of those will be no use to them who have gone astray but pose as the guided.

Section X: Verses (118-140)

In the succeeding verses, the religious innovations of Idolaters are refuted. They claimed that these innovations were inherited by them from Abraham (sws) whereas actually they were Satan's inspirations. The Qur'ān has regarded them as baseless and regarded as allowed the things that were deemed prohibited under these innovations. At this, they raised the propaganda that Muḥammad (sws) had allowed things their ancestors had forbidden ever since the times of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). This campaign naturally impacted those with weak temperaments. I have explained in detail under verses 168-172 that human dispositions are very sensitive in the matters of eating and drinking, and if these matters relate to idolatrous innovations, their impact is very swift. For this reason, the Qur'ān has refuted them in detail and explained the real way of Abraham (sws). This subject will now continue until the end of the *sūrah*. In between, certain things are also discussed as on the spot of comments or refutation of doubts. However, all these directly and indirectly relate to this subject. Their occasion and context will become evident when they are mentioned.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَ مَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ قَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَّا
حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَ اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا لَّيُضِلُّوْنَ بِاَهْوَآئِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَ ذَرُوْا ظَاهِرَ
الْاِثْمِ وَ بَاطِنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْسِبُوْنَ الْاِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَ لَا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ اِنَّهٗ
لَفِسْقٌ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ لَيُوْحُوْنَ اِلٰۤى اَوْلِيٰٓـئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوْكُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ اَطَعْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ اَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَاَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَ

جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِيْ بِهٖ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهٗ فِي الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ وَ
كَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ اَكٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيْهَا لِيَمْكُرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ وَمَا يَمْكُرُوْنَ اِلَّا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ وَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ
قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ رُسُلُ اللّٰهِ ؔۘ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾ فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ
ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّمَآءِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾ وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ
قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۚ
يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ اَوْلِيٰٓؤُهُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَّبَلَغْنَآ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيْٓ
اَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ؕ قَالَ النَّارُ مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّيْ بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًاۢ
بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ وَيُنْذِرُوْنَكُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ؕ
قَالُوْا شَهِدْنَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۰﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ رَّبُّكَ
مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَّاَهْلُهَا غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو
الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ كَمَآ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۳﴾ اِنَّ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَاٰتٍ ۙ وَّ
مَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۴﴾ قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ
الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۵﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ مِمَّا ذَرَاَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ نَصِيْبًا فَقَالُوْا هٰذَا لِلّٰهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهٰذَا لِشُرَكَآئِنَا ۚ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ
فَلَا يَصِلُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِلّٰهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ اِلٰى شُرَكَآئِهِمْ ؕ سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۶﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ قَتْلَ
اَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ لِيُرْدُوْهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ دِيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۷﴾ وَقَالُوْا هٰذِهٖٓ اَنْعَامٌ وَّ
حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖ لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَاَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُوْرُهَا وَاَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ؕ
سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۸﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِ هٰذِهِ الْاَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُوْرِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِنَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مَّيْتَةً
فَهُمْ فِيْهِ شُرَكَآءُ ؕ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۳۹﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَتَلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًاۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّحَرَّمُوْا مَا
رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ افْتِرَآءً عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۰﴾

So if you believe in His revelations, then eat the animals that have been slaughtered by pronouncing the name of God, and why should you not eat from things on which God's name has been pronounced, when He has detailed out what He has regarded as forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion. And indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations. Your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits. And leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin. Indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning. And do not eat from those animals which have been slaughtered without pronouncing God's name. Indeed, this is defiance. And the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you, and if you obey them, then you too will end up as polytheists. (118-121)

Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them. And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this. And when a sign came before them, they would say: "We shall never believe in it until we are given what God's messengers have been given." God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood. Those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues. Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe. And straight is the path of your Lord. We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed. For them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds. (122-127)

And bear in mind the day when He will gather all these. He will say: "O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind." And their companions from mankind will say: "Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us." God will say: "Now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever except what God wills. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." And We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds. O Groups of Jinn and Humans! Did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours? They will say: "We bear witness against our own selves." And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers. This is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware. And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing. And your Lord is self-sufficient and an embodiment of mercy. If He wants, He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations. What you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp. Say: O People of my Nation! You tread on your way; I am treading on mine. So, soon you will know for whom is the good fate of the next abode. Undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed. (128-135)

And they have set aside for God a share from the very cultivated land and animals created by Him. Thus, they say: "This share is for God" – they claim – "And this share is for our associates of God." Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge! And in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them. And had God willed, they would not have done so. So, leave them to these falsehoods of theirs. And they say: "Such and such animals and such and such crops are prohibited. Only they may eat it whom we allow according to our view." And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God. God will soon punish them for these falsehoods they have been guilty of. And they say: "Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it." God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God. They have gone astray and could not remain among the guided. (136-140)

Explanation

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَ مَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَ قَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ
مَّا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَ اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا لَّيُضِلُّوْنَ بِاَهْوَآئِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَ
ذَرُوْا ظَاهِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَ بَاطِنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْسِبُوْنَ الْاِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾[85]

It has been pointed out earlier that when the Qur'ān regarded those animals as lawful for eating which the idolaters had prohibited because of their polytheistic superstitions a great propaganda was created by them. They contended that the Prophet (sws) was regarding as lawful what had been regarded as unlawful ever since the time of their ancestors Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). In such matters, as alluded to before, the general mind is prone to weak faith and is also very sensitive.

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[85] So if you believe in His revelations, then eat the animals that have been slaughtered by pronouncing the name of God, and why should you not eat from things on which God's name has been pronounced, when He has detailed out what He has regarded as forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion. And indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations. Your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits. And leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin. Indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning.

For this reason, it readily accepts such foul campaigns. In order to dispel this impact, the Qur’ān has stated here that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest care about what these idolaters regard as lawful or unlawful once God has specified in His Book what exactly is unlawful to consume. The only restriction on what is lawful is that the name of God should be pronounced when such animals are slaughtered.

The words “so if you believe in His revelations” are for emphasis and, in fact, signify warning. In other words, it is the essential requirement of faith in God’s revelations that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest pay heed to this baseless propaganda. Only God has the right to regard things as lawful or unlawful. If this right is granted to someone else as well, then this will mean that he is being given a share in the rights of God, and this precisely is polytheism. The implication is that the issue does not relate to merely eating one thing or abstaining from it. The issue is that once things which are regarded as unlawful on the basis of polytheistic superstitions are declared lawful by God, [they must be benefited from]. If they are still abstained from, then this will imply indirectly acceding to polytheism. Hence this becomes a matter of belief and disbelief. The requirement of monotheism, as is subsequently stated, is that a person stays away from both the apparent and hidden forms of polytheism.

The words “and why should you not eat from things on which God’s name has been pronounced, when He has detailed out what He has regarded as forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion” imply that when what is unlawful has been explained from God, there is no option left for those who have faith in God to still remain hesitant. The expression “detailed out” refers to the detail that has been mentioned in this *sūrah* as well as later ones (for example, in verses 114-119. What is said here in this *sūrah* relates to regarding edibles unlawful under polytheistic superstitions and not to regard something unlawful merely because of one’s view. However, the stress on eating what is lawful is because the matter of monotheism and polytheism is very important in religion and the *sharī‘ah* does not want even the slightest doubt to arise in such matters. If even a slight concession is given in this regard, it can nurture hypocrisy in people. In other words, this emphasis was to set up a distinction between a sincere believer and a hypocrite. Those who still abstain from consuming things that have been regarded as lawful show that the germs of polytheism and *jāhiliyyah* are still found in them. In the methodology of prophets of God and the righteous, this distinction has a very basic importance and this is also a requisite of human nature and intellect.

The words “with the exception when you under compulsion” state that in such a situation even what is unlawful becomes lawful for a person. The bounds and limits of this compulsion are stated at other instances. It needs to be kept in mind that the idolaters would readily eat what was prohibited by God even when they were not under any compulsion. However, they would never go near those things that they had forbidden on the basis of their polytheistic superstitions – even if their life was at stake.

The word اَهْوَآءُ means “desires.” However, it is evident from the context here that it refers to polytheistic innovations which are regarded as religion merely because of desires. The words بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (without knowledge) refer to this very aspect. In other words, the idolaters do not have any sanction for these from God. The aspect that the Qur’ān wants to allude by the word “most” in “and indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations” has been referred to earlier in verse 116. The expression “without knowledge” is also meant to dispel the misconception of the simple-minded who would magnanimously accept all the views of their elders and superiors thinking that they must have some strong evidence and they [the simple-mind] are not aware of it.

The words “your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits” occur in contrast to what is stated thus in verse 117 “and He well knows the rightly guided.”

The words “and leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin” emphasize in a very subtle way what is said earlier.

Every vice has two aspects. One is its inner aspect and the other its outer one. In other words, one is its essence that is found in a person’s heart and his soul, while the other is its manifestations which become evident in a person’s life. One aspect of polytheism is to regard someone to be God’s associate in His being, attributes and rights. A second one is its manifestation and forms like idols, divining arrows, *baḥirah*, *sā’ibah*, *waṣīlah*, *ḥām* and other similar things. They are the practical forms of polytheistic belief. Obviously, both have a deep relationship with one another. They grow and develop through mutual support. For this reason, if a sin is to be totally rooted out both its essence and its manifestation need to be rooted out. Without adopting this strategy, this is not possible. If the forms and manifestations of a sin are ignored by thinking that since its essence has been refuted, then such a sin will continue to grow and develop through its forms and manifestations and gradually takes firm roots in the society.

Here, in the verse under discussion, attention is drawn to the fact that just as it is essential to forsake polytheism, animals that are regarded as prohibited by rendering them sacred under polytheistic beliefs must also be considered having no sanctity and thus lawful to consume. They must be slaughtered in a way that God’s name is pronounced at the time of slaughter. If they still feel hesitant in this regard, it means polytheism still has some roots in their hearts. And if these roots are not there, then from where are the branches getting their nourishment? In verse 145 of this very *sūrah*, it is thus said: قُلْ لَّآ اَجِدُ فِيْ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطْعَمُهٗٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَيْتَةً اَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوْحًا اَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيْرٍ فَاِنَّهٗ رِجْسٌ اَوْ فِسْقًا اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ[86]

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[86] Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else’s name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

It was on this very principle that the Prophet (sws) obliterated all the manifestations and signs of polytheism right after the conquest of Makkah. Though the word used in the verse under discussion is اثم, concomitant indications show that it means polytheism.

It may also be kept in mind that the case of virtues (like vices) is no different. Each has an essence as well as a form. Just as it is essential for the elimination of vice that both essence and form be eradicated, for virtues too it is essential that if they have to be nourished then its form too must be nourished together with its essence. If the form is not nourished, it will become depleted and its growth will be stunted. More discussion on this aspect will be found under verse 33 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the next *sūrah*.

The words "indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning" warn those who were arguing and debating with the Prophet (sws) and the believers in support of their baseless innovations.

وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاِنَّهٗ لَفِسْقٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ لَيُوْحُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓـِٕهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ اَطَعْتُمُوْهُمْ
اِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾[87]

In the previous verse, it was stated that animals that were prohibited on the basis of polytheistic beliefs should be consumed by slaughtering them while pronouncing God's name. In this verse, animals on which the name of God is not pronounced are regarded as prohibited. The Idolaters raised a furore on this issue as well just as they did on things that were regarded as lawful earlier. The reason for this was that they did not believe that God's name must necessarily be taken on an animal to render it lawful. When the believers would regard those animals as lawful which they and their forefathers regarded as unlawful, it must have struck a blow to their arrogance that arose from their religious concepts. They must have tried to incite their masses against the believers in a very malicious way. It is this furore which is being pointed to by the words "and the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you." However, the Qur'ān did not pay heed to their uproar just as it did not in the case of previous one. It openly stated if the name of God is not pronounced at the time of slaughter, it is pure defiance on their part. It also sounded this warning to the believers that if they are influenced by this uproar and obey them, then they too will end up as polytheists.

Here it needs to be reflected as to why taking God's name at the time of an animal's slaughter has been regarded as essential so that in its absence it becomes unlawful to consume. Some of its reasons are very apparent. I will try to allude to them.

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87. And do not eat from those animals which have been slaughtered without pronouncing God's name. Indeed, this is defiance. And the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you, and if you obey them, then you too will end up as polytheists.

Firstly, every act that is begun without taking God's name and *takbīr* is devoid of His blessings. It is essential to pronounce His name while benefitting from any of His favours whether big or small so that people are able to acknowledge this graciousness of God. Without this confession and acknowledgement, whatever use a person gains from a thing is extortion and extortion is nothing but stubbornness and obduracy which makes a person worthy of punishment before God.

Secondly, it is a requirement for the sanctity of life that the name of God be pronounced at the time of slaughter. Life is sacred, whoever it may belong to. Had God not given us the permission, it would not have been allowed for us to take the life of even an animal. It is only at God's behest that we have this right. For this reason, it is essential that we pronounce His name whenever we take the life of an animal. If His name is not pronounced or if it is pronounced together with someone else's name or merely someone else's name is pronounced, then this will violate the sanctity of that animal's life as well as that of the Creator of life.

Thirdly, this shuts the door to the wide path of polytheism. Those who have studied history of religions know that the sacrifice of animals, their vows and offerings have always had a significant role in worship rituals. As a result of this significance, they received great impetus in polytheistic religions. Nations who became religiously enamoured with a deity tried to win its pleasure through animal offerings and sacrifice. The challenge of Satan mentioned in the Qur'ān in which he threatened to lead mankind astray also specially alludes to this way of misguiding them. In order to close all these doors that lead to polytheism, Islam has forbidden animals unless the name of God is pronounced on them at the time of their slaughter. If this is not done, then not only is it a wrong act in itself the animal also is forbidden for eating.

It is evident from this that in Islam this only is not forbidden that an animal be slaughtered such that the name of someone other than God is pronounced, this too is forbidden that an animal be slaughtered by not taking any name at all. Only forgetfulness in doing so can be an exception, and this forgetfulness stands forgiven only for believers because the name of God is already found in their hearts and intent. Only temporary negligence makes them forget expressing it.

أَوَ مَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهٗ نُوْرًا يَّمْشِيْ بِهٖ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهٗ فِي الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ
لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ اَكٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيْهَا لِيَمْكُرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ وَمَا يَمْكُرُوْنَ اِلَّا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ وَ
مَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾[88]

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[88] Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them. And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement

The word "death" refers to the life spent in disbelief and "life" refers to life spent in belief. The word "light" refers to the Book mentioned in verses 114-119 that was revealed to distinguish right from wrong and to explain the lawful and the unlawful. "Layers of Darkness" refer to the speculations, superstitions, whims and innovations referred to in verses 116 and 119.

The first verse presents a parable of belief and disbelief: God blessed the believers with the life of faith after the death of disbelief and also bestowed on them a radiant light in the form of His book. It is stated that will these people be the same as the ones whose parable is that they are wandering in the darkness of their superstitions and innovations and are not ready to emerge from it. The purpose of mentioning this parable is to encourage the believers that they no longer should they pay heed to this clamour of these devils from among human and jinnkind. God has blessed them with life and they should move on with this message of life. It is not befitting for them now to listen to the nonsense of these people who are wandering in darkness.

The words "with which he is walking among people" refer to the fact that when someone is blessed with light from God, his obligation towards it is to obtain guidance from it and also present it before other people so that those among them who have the potential can benefit from it. Light is not a thing to be hidden. It is to be placed at a high place on a path frequented by people. Thus, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew, 5:15)

The words "in this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them" are meant to assure the Prophet (sws). He should not despair at people who insist to remain in darkness and show aversion to the guidance he has brought to them; the law of God is that what people like surrounds them. This aspect is discussed further in verse 125 thus: فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى السَّمَآءِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ.[89] We have also discussed this law at the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Consider the sentence وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِىْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ اَكٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيْهَا. The word جَعَلْنَا here means امهلنا (to give respite).

The words "is a similar way" in "and We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it" refer to the situation mentioned earlier in verse 121. These words actually mention God's

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so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this.

[89] Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe.

established practice in a different way which has been stated earlier in verse 112. What is implied is that if these deviants among human and jinnkind are trying their best to oppose the mission of the Prophet (sws), then this is not something new. People whose interest is tied with evil have always tried to plot schemes to oppose the preaching of prophets and in accordance with God's established practice they are given a certain respite so that whatever wrongdoings they are able to do, they have the opportunity.

In the verse وَ مَا یَمۡکُرُوۡنَ اِلَّا بِاَنۡفُسِہِمۡ وَ مَا یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ, an incomplete verb is suppressed before یَمۡکُرُوۡنَ. The verse implies that the schemes they plotted went against them. Those who oppose the truth do not harm the truth; they in fact fatally harm themselves. However, since they cannot see their fate, they are not cognizant of it. Similar is the case with the wrongdoers of the Quraysh. They too are following their footsteps and will ultimately reach the same fate though they are not aware of this.

وَ اِذَا جَآءَتۡہُمۡ اٰیَۃٌ قَالُوۡا لَنۡ نُّؤۡمِنَ حَتّٰی نُؤۡتٰی مِثۡلَ مَاۤ اُوۡتِیَ رُسُلُ اللّٰہِ ؕۘ اَللّٰہُ اَعۡلَمُ حَیۡثُ یَجۡعَلُ رِسَالَتَہٗ ؕ سَیُصِیۡبُ الَّذِیۡنَ
اَجۡرَمُوۡا صَغَارٌ عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ وَ عَذَابٌ شَدِیۡدٌۢ بِمَا کَانُوۡا یَمۡکُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾[90]

This is an example of the scheme mentioned earlier. The leaders of the Quraysh would precisely plot this scheme, as has been detailed in the Qur'ān. They too were afflicted with the same conceit as that of the rejecters of messengers and the haughty people of the past and asked that if God wanted to grant the position of messengerhood to someone, why could He only single out Muḥammad (sws) for this position? Why did He not choose from among the leaders of Makkah and Ṭā'if? Obviously, they gave this statement only as a machination and an evil scheme. The purpose was to provide a cover to them for their egotism and self-deception and to fool the general masses. The simpletons among them highly regarded worldly means and resources. If they saw someone prominent and resourceful in this world, they thought that he must be great in the sight of God as well. They would be very easily lured in this trap. For this reason, the Qur'ān has called it a plot – a political gimmick.

The words "God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood" imply that the position of messengerhood is not something which every Tom, Dick and Harry is entitled to. God knows full well who to choose for this. It is not a velvet or silky cloth that at times is even put on donkeys. It is in fact a divine appointment which is received only by those who are selected by God for it.

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[90] And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this. And when a sign came before them, they would say: "We shall never believe in it until we are given what God's messengers have been given." God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood. Those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues.

Just as it is evident from these words that prophethood and messengerhood are blessings of God given only to those chosen by Him, it is also evident from it that only those people are chosen for these positions are the best human beings standing at the miracle of lofty morals.

In the verse "those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues" while the words "working mischief" refers to all their wrongdoings, a special reference here is to their arrogance as per which they demanded that they too be chosen as prophets and messengers. It is because of this arrogance that they will be humiliated and punished by God.

فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّمَآءِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ
السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾[91]

The word حَرَج means "a narrow place replete with bushes." Here it occurs after ضَيِّق to emphasize it.

The word تصّعد means "to climb an incline with difficulty."

Just as the word سَمَآء means "clouds" it also means "atmosphere." Thus for example in verse 24 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm it is said: اَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ اَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَآءِ.[92]

These verses depict the real reason for not professing faith: they have been deprived by God's graciousness to accept faith. In other words, their schemes and plots are only a deception. The real thing that stops them from professing faith is the filth of disbelief and polytheism whose thick rust has settled on their hearts. For this reason, the way of Islam seems to them to be a steep incline; when they imagine surmounting it, they feel tightness in their chests and become breathless. God makes people whose hearts have the filth of polytheism inconducive to Islam, as is said in verse 122 thus: "in this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them." Only those people's hearts are inclined to Islam which are without such filth. Because this is also in accordance with God's established practice, it is ascribed to Him.

Consider the sentence: هٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا. Since a demonstrative pronoun has the meaning of a verb in it, the word مُسۡتَقِيۡمًا is in the accusative of state from صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ. What is implied is that Islam is the straight path adjudicated from God; it is the straight path endorsed by human nature that has neither any zigzags in it nor any ups and downs. However, those who have burdened themselves with heaps of unnatural filth find it difficult to tread.

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[91] Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe. And straight is the path of your Lord. We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed. For them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds.

[92] Have you not reflected how God has mentioned the parable of the noble word? It is like a noble tree whose root is deep in the ground and whose branches are spread out in the air. It continues to bear its fruit with the directive of its Lord in every season.

The next sentence "We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed" implies that God has furnished all arguments that show that Islam is the religion of human nature as well as the way of Abraham (sws). However, only those people will find these arguments convincing who have the intention to be reminded and the ability to reflect.

The sentence "for them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds" states the reward of those whose hearts are made conducive to Islam by God. On the other hand, for the adversaries of Islam, there will be the abode of humiliation and their companions will be those from among the jinn and human kind whose fiendish suggestions were readily accepted by them and they went astray. This sentence is in parallel to what is said above thus: "soon these wrongdoers will face …"

وَ يَوۡمَ يَحۡشُرُهُمۡ جَمِيۡعًا ۚ يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ قَدِ اسۡتَكۡثَرۡتُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاِنۡسِ ۚ وَ قَالَ اَوۡلِيٰٓؤُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاِنۡسِ رَبَّنَا اسۡتَمۡتَعَ بَعۡضُنَا
بِبَعۡضٍ وَّ بَلَغۡنَاۤ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيۡۤ اَجَّلۡتَ لَنَا ؕ قَالَ النَّارُ مَثۡوٰىكُمۡ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَاۤ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيۡمٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ وَ
كَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّيۡ بَعۡضَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ بَعۡضًۢا بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾ يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ وَ الۡاِنۡسِ اَلَمۡ يَاۡتِكُمۡ رُسُلٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ يَقُصُّوۡنَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ
اٰيٰتِيۡ وَ يُنۡذِرُوۡنَكُمۡ لِقَآءَ يَوۡمِكُمۡ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوۡا شَهِدۡنَا عَلٰۤى اَنۡفُسِنَا وَ غَرَّتۡهُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا وَ شَهِدُوۡا عَلٰۤى اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ اَنَّهُمۡ
كَانُوۡا كٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳۰﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَنۡ لَّمۡ يَكُنۡ رَّبُّكَ مُهۡلِكَ الۡقُرٰى بِظُلۡمٍ وَّ اَهۡلُهَا غٰفِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَ لِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوۡا ؕ وَ مَا رَبُّكَ
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾[93]

The pronoun "these" in "and bear in mind the day when He will gather all these"

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[93] And bear in mind the day when He will gather all these. He will say: "O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind." And their companions from mankind will say: "Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us." God will say: "Now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever except what God wills. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." And We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds. O Groups of Jinn and Humans! Did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours? They will say: "We bear witness against our own selves." And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers. This is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware. And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing.

refers to the diehard wrongdoers mentioned in earlier in verses 123 and 124. The word "all" is emphasizing that besides the devils among human beings, the ones among the jinn too will be gathered there. They were the ones who led astray these diehard wrongdoers.

Also the expression "O Group of Jinn" does not refer to their entire community. Only those who followed Iblīs, their supreme leader, are the ones implied. He himself, as is known from the Qur'ān, belonged to the jinn. It was he who had deceived Adam (sws) and while defying the command of prostration had arrogantly said: قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَكَ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ اَخَّرْتَنِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَاَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا.[94] At another instance, his words are: لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ وَلَا تَجِدُ اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ.[95]

In the verses under discussion, people who have a flair for language know that the words "you have led to yourself many from mankind" have a very subtle insinuation to the words of the two afore-cited verses: "I shall consume all his progeny except a few" and "and You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You." In other words, God will address these figurative descendents of Iblīs and say that they have successfully accomplished the mission of their leader: they have led them away and how docile were these descendents that were lured away by them in such a naïve way.

In the verse "and their companions from mankind will say: 'Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us'" the words "thoroughly benefitted from one another" imply that these companions from mankind worshipped these deities, made offerings and vows to them, regarded at their behest what was lawful to be unlawful and vice versa, were misused by their soothsayers, magicians and mediums for their evil motives until this day arrived and they never got the chance to reflect on what they were doing.

It may be kept in mind that in the social and religious lives of the Arabs in the *jāhiliyyah* period, the jinn played a very significant role. It was because of the jinn that soothsaying and magic flourished. They even thought that poetry was a product of inspiration received from the jinn and that every great poet had companion jinn. It is for this reason that they said that the Prophet (sws) too was accompanied by jinn. Similarly, every valley was regarded to have jinn that would control it and the jinn had a significant role in matters of their travels, stays, wars, peace and conquests.

Here an aspect of eloquence of the discourse needs to be kept in mind: This statement of the devils among mankind will be a confession and an expression of shame and through this prelude they will seek God's forgiveness. However, it is clearly evident from the style of the discourse that God will interject even before their statement is complete, and without giving them a chance to apologize, will declare His

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[94] He said: "Just see! Is this the one who you honoured above me? If you give me respite until the Day of Judgement, I shall consume all his progeny except a few." (17:62)

[95] I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them. Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left. And You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You. (7:16-17)

verdict that Hell is now their abode in which they will abide forever (النَّارُ مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ); so they must not try to present excuses; the doors to apology, excuse and forgiveness now stand closed.

Here the words "except what God wills" after "now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever" are worthy of attention. A similar style can be seen in verse 107 of Sūrah Hūd: خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ.[96]

This exception has caused some confusion in the minds of exegetes. This is because it shows that apparently "eternal stay" in Hell does not after all seem "eternal." They think that the word "eternal" here signifies a long period of time. In order to avoid this interpretation, some have regarded ما to mean من. These interpretations are against Arabic language. The exception of eternal Hell is from those who deserve eternal Hell. This would mean that essentially there will still be some who deserve eternal Hell.

In my view, the exception is not meant to express the fact that the time of stay in Hell will end one day. It means that once these people are afflicted with punishment, no hope will be left for them; no intercession, influence or pleading will have any impact; the limits of intention and freedom of will die away; no time will be left for repentance or reformation. The only thing that will remain is God's intention and will and the secrets of His intention and will are known to Him only. He is able to accomplish, come what may, whatever He intends (فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ) and is All-Wise and All-Knowing. This is what most can be understood from the words of the Qur'ān. Those who have gone beyond these limits to infer something should be judged for their inference on its own merit. It is not right to regard it to be the purport of the Qur'ān. It may also be kept in mind that the concept of "eternity" is not something that can be fully grasped by the human mind. If people try to go after its implication, they may enter the domain known only to God (*mutashābihāt*). The Qur'ān has stopped its followers from doing so. For this reason, it is better to accept whatever God has disclosed and consign the knowledge of the next steps to Him.

Verse 129: وَكَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّيْ بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (and We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds) refers to what is said earlier in verse 128: يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ (O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind). The words وَلّٰى and تولية فلانا الامر means to make someone in charge and in control of someone. What is implied is that if these devils have been able to control so many human beings, it is not because these devils have any authority over human beings; the misdeeds of these human beings are the reason for it. They left God's guidance to follow their desires and religious innovations. The result was that they became followers of Satan, and it is the law of God that those who become the followers of Satan are consigned to his progeny.

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[96] They shall remain there as long as the heavens and the earth are intact except what your Lord wills.

The word “wrongdoers” in “and We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds” refers to polytheists and disbelievers. This topic was discussed earlier in detail and will also come up ahead too in various forms.

The question “O Groups of Jinn and Humans, did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours?” is meant to leave them with no excuse. The implication is that in the absence of messengers, they could have had an excuse but not after they have come to them. They closed their eyes and ears after listening to and understanding everything.

This verse also shows that just as the Almighty sent human beings as messengers among human beings, He also sent jinn as messengers them among the jinn. The necessary consequence of God’s established practice regarding messengers also entails that the messengers belong to the same species as their addressees. This is obviously because they speak the same language and are able to convey the truth conclusively to them according to their circumstances. This conclusive communication is the real obligation of prophets and messengers and this is not possible if they are not of the same species as their addressees. Both the jinn and human beings are different species. Most of their issues are different from one another. If there is anything common, it can be regarding some principles related to beliefs and morality. Issues related to the *sharī‘ah*, law and social spheres are bound to be different. Furthermore messengers are exemplars for their own kind; so, how can they become examples for others? If for human beings, no messenger from among the jinn can become an example, how can a messenger belonging to human beings become an example for the jinn? The reason that God sends messengers to their own kind obviously is that because he is their own brother who speaks their own language and represents their collective conscience and is an exceptional human being himself as well. This makes conclusive communication of the truth possible. If this pattern was not adopted, the jinn could have presented this excuse on the Day of Judgment that how could the words and deeds of someone not belonging to their species become a conclusive argument for them. However, this much is true that just as the miscreants and devils among jinn and human beings collude and collaborate against the truth, as is stated in the previous verse, there are examples in which the righteous among the jinn support the truth which manifests itself through righteous individuals and prophets among human beings. This is because the truth in principle is a common treasure for both these species. In fact, it is common for everyone in this universe. This issue will be discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Jinn. Here, this brief note should suffice.

In my opinion, the word يَقُصُّوْنَ is used in يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِىْ because the word revelations here refers to the revelations that pertain to warning. A better part of them consists of the fate of the disbelievers and their anecdotes. Here too this is precisely the occasion. The implication of the question God will pose to them is: Did not My messengers warn you of the fate of the disbelievers and of the advent of that day so that you have now consigned yourself to eternal doom?

Consider next the words: "They will say: " 'We bear witness against our own selves.' And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers." Precisely the same has been sated thus in verses 9-11 of Sūrah al-Mulk: قَالُوْا بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيْرٌ ۙ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَ قُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚۖ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيْرٍ وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ اَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِيْٓ اَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ فَاعْتَرَفُوْا بِذَنْۢبِهِمْ ۚ فَسُحْقًا لِّاَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ (Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'" And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell." And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell.)

The words "and the life of this world deceived them" in the part of the verses under discussion is a parenthetical sentence. It implies that what they are audaciously rejecting today will be helplessly acknowledged by them on the final day and they will bear witness to it against their own selves. This is because the only reason they are denying this today is that the deceptive charms of this world have led them astray because this world is not based on the principle of reward and punishment. It is based on the principle of trial and thus evil too is given respite in it. This apparent situation has led them to believe that there is no reward and punishment and those who claim it are saying something that has no sound basis.

The words "this is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware" state the reason why it is specially arranged that every species whether jinn or mankind have messengers of their own kind. The Almighty does not punish anyone without informing him of the consequences so that they are given a chance to repent and reform or get ready to bear its consequences.

Consider next, the last verse: "And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing." The word "all" when used in such a context refers to, it refers to those entities that are mentioned previously. Here it refers to the groups of jinn and human beings mentioned earlier. The implied meaning is that whatever they did was done after the truth was conclusively communicated to them by the Almighty. Thus they duly deserve punishment for this attitude and be placed in various sections of Hell according to the extent of their crimes. God will have no botheration to categorize them according to their misdeeds because He is fully aware of them. He will deal with every individual the way he deserves.

وَ رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَ يَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ كَمَآ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ؕ﴿۱۳۳﴾ اِنَّ

مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَاٰتٍ ۙ وَّمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ
عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾[97]

What was said earlier was evidently directed at the Quraysh. However, they were principle statements. The latter are now clearly and directly addressed and warned that God has made arrangements for the conclusive communication of the truth to them. They are now passing through a final trial. If they do not get hold of themselves, they will be seized by God and when this happens they will not be able to escape.

When attributes of God are mentioned adjacent to one another without any particle of coordination as is the case in رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ, it means that they exist in Him at the same time. Because of the fact that God is self-sufficient, He does not care for anyone if they deny Him and He also stands to gain nothing if people praise Him. If He sends messengers, reveals Books and invites people to faith, it is not because without their faith He will not be able to accomplish certain tasks. He does all this because besides being self-sufficient, He is also an embodiment of mercy. It is the requisite of His mercy that He does not punish people before conclusively conveying the truth to them. On the contrary, He makes all sorts of arrangements for this communication and gives respite to people until they work as much mischief as they can. This actually is a prelude to what is coming ahead.

The words “He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations” mean that it is not that God cannot seize them for their rebelliousness or if He destroys them, His world will become desolate; in fact, the sole reason is His mercy. Otherwise, He can destroy them at will and replace them with others. Moreover, this fact is something that they can easily understand by analogy. They too had replaced some previous nations whose history has been narrated to them and whose remnants can be seen in their land. These nations were guilty of rebelliousness and were destroyed as a result and replaced. So if he replaced them and made the Quraysh/Ishmaelites their heirs, why can’t He replace them too? Who can stop Him? Their own history bears witness against them.

A linguistic aspect of the verse is also worthy of attention.

The words are: وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ. Apparently the last part should have been: مَنْ يَّشَآءُ. This is because the particle ما is mostly used for non-living things. In my opinion, the Almighty has used ما instead of مَنْ to express His profound power and to shatter the pride of the Quraysh. The implication is that these people have become arrogant because of their power and glory while such is the power of God that He can replace them with whichever thing of the desert He wants to. At one instance, Jesus (sws), while addressing the Israelites, is also reported to have said: "And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham," (Matthew, 3:9). The style of this verse intends to convey precisely this. In fact, the style of the Qur'ān is much more forceful because of its general nature.

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[97] And your Lord is self-sufficient and an embodiment of mercy. If He wants, He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations. What you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp. Say: O People of my Nation! You tread on your way; I am treading on mine. So, soon you will know for whom is the good fate of the next abode. Undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed.

The words "you are being promised" in "what you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp" refer to both promises: worldly punishment in this world for denying God's messenger and the punishment of the Day of Judgement. The expression اعجزه الشیء means "something escaped his grasp; he could not control it." Concealed in this warning is that they should not show haste in demanding the punishment; if they do not change their ways, they will be seized by it.

A parallel phrase has been suppressed in قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّیْ عَامِلٌ to the effect: اِنِّیْ عَامِلٌ عَلٰى مَكَانَتِیْ. The word مَكَانَة means "place"; "status"; "position." In the Qur'ān, it has been used to imply "place." Thus in verse 67 of Sūrah Yāsīn, the words are: وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَمَسَخْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى مَكَانَتِهِمْ.[98] The meaning "way" is its consequential meaning. Thus, if it is said: "continue what you are doing at your place, and I will continue what I am at my place" the meaning "way" is automatically incorporated in it. The implication is that if they are not ready to change their place of disbelief and their stance of opposing the truth, then they should do what they want to. The Prophet (sws) is not going to deviate the slightest from his stance. Those who have a flair for Arabic know that there is more stress in اِنِّیْ عَامِلٌ as compared to اعْمَلُوْا. This is because adjectives and attributes as opposed to verbs encapsulate the meaning of stability and permanence. These words in fact sound a clear acquittal and severe warning from the Prophet (sws).

The words "so, soon you will know for whom is the good fate of the next abode" sound the real warning. The conventional meaning of the Arabic word عَاقِبَة is "fate" whether good or bad. However, at times, it means "good fate." This actually refers to its real meaning because a fate worthy of mention is the one that is good because this is the real purpose of creation of this universe and not the fate of failure which is against this purpose. Thus it is used in the meaning of "good fate" at many instances in the Qur'ān. In verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd, it is said: فَاصْبِرْ ۛ اِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ.[99] In verse 123 of Sūrah Ṭāhā, the words are: وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوٰى.[100]

The word الدَّار refers to the Hereafter. This is because it is the place where results will manifest themselves. Believers make efforts in this world keeping it in view. The success they achieve in this world is not decisive. This is because the actual goal is not this world; it is the hereafter. Unless that goal is achieved, actual success and actual failure cannot be gauged. Also concealed in this is that if in this world those who oppose the truth are giving the opportunity to make hey, then this is not something to be proud of. This is just a temporary respite. Real success will be decided on that day.

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[98] And had it been Our will, We could have defaced them where they stood so that they could neither go forward nor retrace their steps.

[99] So, remain steadfast. The ultimate triumph is for those who fear God.

[100] And success in the end is for piety.

What had remained ambiguous in the earlier section is clarified by the last words “undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed.” Earlier it was said that people will see who achieves final success. Now it is said that disbelievers and polytheists, usurpers and ingrates will have no share in success. This is actually based on the premise that this universe from its very existence shows that it has not been created for amusement by its maker. It is the creation of someone who is wise, knowledgeable, just and merciful. How then is it possible that He make those people succeed who are guilty of injustice and polytheism?

Here what must specially be noted is that what is stated here is stated as a principle and not in a specific way. In other words, it is not stated that the final success will be of the righteous or they will succeed in the hereafter; it is only said that the wrongdoers will have no share of success in the hereafter. This style is very effective with regard to the wisdom found in it and also with regard to its message. It also bears witness to the fear and trust found in the prophets and the righteous. Only this much can be said of something which is still hidden from the eyes, on which a decision is still awaited and for the materialization of which many a peak needs to be surmounted and many a dangerous territory traversed. Making any claim beyond this is against the requisites of serving God and fearing Him.

وَ جَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ مِمَّا ذَرَاَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَ الْاَنْعَامِ نَصِيْبًا فَقَالُوْا هٰذَا لِلّٰهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ هٰذَا لِشُرَكَآئِنَا ۚ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ
اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ مَا كَانَ لِلّٰهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ اِلٰى شُرَكَآئِهِمْ ؕ سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَ كَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ قَتْلَ اَوْلَادِهِمْ
شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ لِيُرْدُوْهُمْ وَ لِيَلْبِسُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ دِيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَ لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ مَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَ قَالُوْا هٰذِهٖٓ اَنْعَامٌ وَّ
حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖۗ لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ اَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُوْرُهَا وَ اَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ؕ
سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَ قَالُوْا مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِ هٰذِهِ الْاَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُوْرِنَا وَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِنَا ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّكُنْ
مَّيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيْهِ شُرَكَآءُ ؕ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَتَلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ
حَرَّمُوْا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ افْتِرَآءً عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا وَ مَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾[101]

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[101]. And they have set aside for God a share from the very cultivated land and animals created by Him. Thus, they say: “This share is for God” – they claim – “And this share is for our associates of God.” Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of

This particular discussion, as is evident from verses 118-121, began with a refutation of the innovations of the Idolaters of Makkah which they had invented because of their polytheistic superstitions. In response to this refutation, appropriate directives were given to the believers to counter the furore of argumentation they had raised and at the same time some warnings were also meted out to the Idolaters. Now verses detail out these religious innovations of the Idolaters so that the believers can protect themselves from this filth.

The important word to note in the distribution of shares mentioned is "they claim." In other words, the distribution is based on conjecture but they claim that it is from the *sharī‘ah* of Abraham (sws). It may be kept in mind that the Idolaters believed in God and regarded Him to be the creator of everything and, as His share, would give in charity a portion of their produce and livestock. This practice was in vogue among them ever since the times of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). About the latter, it is stated in verse 55 of Sūrah Maryam: وَكَانَ يَاْمُرُ اَهْلَهٗ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ.[102] Later when polytheistic innovations spread among them, then just as in the rights of God their alleged deities were given a share by them, in a similar way, the *zakāh* given in His name was also distributed to these deities.

Consider next, the words: "Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge!" This shows that their deities held superiority to God. At another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that the Idolaters loved their deities more than God. This is not something specific to the Idolaters of Makkah; it is the trait of all polytheistic nations; in fact, it is the inherent nature of polytheism. When some entities are made partners of God by polytheists, it is obviously because these people think that they provide them with their immediate needs, and if there are some needs that God has to provide, then He too will do it through these associates. So much so, if the Almighty does not want to

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God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge! And in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them. And had God willed, they would not have done so. So, leave them to these falsehoods of theirs. And they say: "Such and such animals and such and such crops are prohibited. Only they may eat it whom we allow according to our view." And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God. God will soon punish them for these falsehoods they have been guilty of. And they say: "Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it." God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God. They have gone astray and could not remain among the guided.

[102] He would command his people to the prayer and the *zakāh*.

provide them, these associates will do so. After this, God has no importance left in their lives. Thus to them God was no more than a useless elder of a family. So, they dealt with Him too in this capacity. They did give in His name something as per the tradition, but if some goat dedicated to an idol died or was stolen or if mice ate away the grain dedicated to it, it was necessarily compensated through God's share. On the contrary, if the share that was to be given in God's name was afflicted by some calamity, they did not dare compensate it through the share of their deities. That is why it is stated that how evil is the judgement they make. The fact is that all that they receive is from God; but they distribute the share given in His name in whatever way they like. They favour their hypothetical deities and disregard the real Deity.

The words "and in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them" imply that their associates do not just have a share in wealth, but also in the lives created by God. It has been stated under verse 100 that this heinous crime of filicide was perpetrated by them to earn the pleasure of some alleged rebellious jinn. They thought that if they did not make this sacrifice of one child, all their children or all their family would be killed by him. Such superstitions have persisted in all polytheistic nations of the past and even today are found in the lower sections of some nations in spite of the developments of the modern age. A major role in bolstering these superstitions is played by the agents of the devils who become their disciples. In the times of *jāhiliyyah*, the priests and pundits of the temples dedicated to the jinn would deceive the simpletons who would turn to them by saying that such and such jinn is very angry with them; if they did not earn his pleasure, he would destroy all his family. These naïve elements would be inveigled by them in this manner to perpetrate this outrageous crime and in this way ended up ruining their world and the hereafter.

The word "religion" in "so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them" refers the religion these people inherited from Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). In other words, the devils from among the jinn and humankind deceived the foolish and ruined them spiritually and materially. On the one hand, they deprived them of their children and, on the other, the simple religion taught to them by Abraham (sws) ended up becoming an amalgam of falsities.

The words "and had God willed, they would not have done so" are meant to assure the Prophet (sws): if these people continue to fight and argue with him in support of their foolish notions and callous practices and are not prepared to listen to him, he should let them remain in their self-created mischief; he is not required to force people to accept something; God has given evil the chance to thrive in this world too; those who want to adhere to evil can do so; He does not like people to forcibly accept His guidance; had He wanted people to be guided, all of them would have been on the straight path and none would have gone astray. In other words, when this is an established practice of God, the Prophet (sws) should not be worried on their stubbornness.

The word حِجْرٌ in وَ قَالُوْا هٰذِهٖٓ اَنْعَامٌ وَّ حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ means “prohibited.” However, it is also a religious term of Arab *jāhiliyyah* and refers to things that have been prohibited because of some religious custom. These words actually state the self-made edicts of the priests and keepers of their temples. There were many dietary restrictions among them regarding what was dedicated by them from their produce and livestock. For example, certain things could only be eaten (or the converse) by men or by women or by widows but could not be touched by married women or by spinsters. Such foolish practices still exist in current times among families prone to religious innovations. Since all these self-styled edicts were issued by these priests and they alone were its scholars none other could give his own opinion in their matter or even slightly deviate from them. Their authoritativeness is signified by the word “according to our view.”

Consider next, the words “And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God.” They regarded some animals prohibited for riding. Some examples of this can be seen under verse 104 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah. Similarly, they did not pronounce the name of God while slaughtering certain animals dedicated to their deities. It should be kept in mind that the people of Arabia knew the correct way of slaughter through the traditions of the Abrahamic religion and would also pronounce God’s name. However, the dominance of polytheistic traditions and beliefs had made them deviate from this way. It seems that pronouncing the name of God on certain animals was regarded by them to be against their polytheistic *sharī‘ah*. All these baseless beliefs were founded on their polytheistic superstitions but they would ascribe them to God. For this reason, the Qur’ān says that this is falsehood that they impute to God and has threatened them that they will soon be punished by them.

Consider next the words “And they say: “Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it.” This too forms their self-issued edicts. The response to this is stated right after in the words “God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.” In other words, it is against His knowledge and wisdom that He not punish those who create a *sharī‘ah* of their own but attribute it to God. A subtle reference in this is that if there is some delay in punishing them, it is based on His knowledge and wisdom.

Consider next the words “Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God.” This is an expression of sorrow on their evil fate and on all these foolish practices which do not have any divine sanction. There is no doubt in their wretchedness. They deviated from the right path and when God guided them to it through His prophet, they did not accept it because of their wretchedness as depicted by the words “they have gone astray and could not remain among the guided.”

Section XI: Verses (141-165)

In this section, the afore-mentioned religious innovations are refuted. This refutation is from many aspects.

Firstly, land-produce, cattle and live-stock are all created by God and it is because of His graciousness that the Quraysh are their beneficiaries. They should avail them, express gratitude to Him and fulfil their duty towards these favours. They should not regard things as lawful or unlawful under their polytheistic superstitions. Satan is their inveterate foe.

Secondly, they are asked about the prohibition of every pair of male and female from all species of four-legged animals whether its male is prohibited or female. They are also asked to prove if any of these animals was prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws). A rejoinder is then sounded to them that when they cannot prove any of them to be prohibited, how can from among their offspring some be regarded as lawful and others unlawful? How can some fruits of the same tree be allowed and others disallowed? What can this mean?

Thirdly, in the divine revelation received by the Prophet (sws) regarding the lawfulness and unlawfulness of certain animals in the religion of Abraham (sws), he finds only certain specific ones as prohibited. What was prohibited to the Jews was the same as prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws) except the ones that were prohibited to them because of their rebelliousness.

After that, reference is given to the basic teachings of the religion of Abraham (sws) and stated that the Quraysh too are invited to this straight path. They must not deviate from them and wander in misguidance. At the same time, the *sharī‘ah* given to Moses (sws) is alluded to because it too guides those who adopted it to precisely this path.

After that the great favour done by God to the Arabs by revealing the Qur’ān to them is mentioned. They are warned that by revealing this Book the truth stands conclusively conveyed to them. They are now left with no excuse. If they await punishment to believe in these things, they should know that belief expressed on such instances will be of no avail.

At the end, a proclamation is made from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he has been blessed with the guidance of Abraham’s religion. His prayer, his sacrifice, his life and death are all for God. Whomsoever among his addressees would like to adopt this path should do it or else be prepared to be questioned by Him. None shall be questioned on behalf of another. At the same time, the Quraysh are warned that they are not the first nation to have appeared on the stage of the world. Nations before them were destroyed because of their rebelliousness. If, as their successors, they too adopt their ways there is no reason why they would not suffer the same fate. God’s law is the same for all.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّ غَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّ النَّخْلَ وَ الزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ وَ الزَّيْتُوْنَ وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّ
غَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَ اٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ ۖؗ وَ لَا تُسْرِفُوْا ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۱﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ
حَمُوْلَةً وَّ فَرْشًا ؕ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۴۲﴾ ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّاْنِ
اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ نَبِّئُوْنِيْ بِعِلْمٍ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۳﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ
اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ اَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ اِذْ وَصّٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۴﴾ قُلْ لَّآ اَجِدُ فِيْ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطْعَمُهٗٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَيْتَةً اَوْ دَمًا
مَّسْفُوْحًا اَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيْرٍ فَاِنَّهٗ رِجْسٌ اَوْ فِسْقًا اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّ لَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۴۵﴾ وَ
عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِيْ ظُفُرٍ ۚ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَ الْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُوْمَهُمَآ اِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُوْرُهُمَآ اَوِ الْحَوَايَآ
اَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۖؗ وَ اِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۶﴾ فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُوْ رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ ۚ وَ لَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُهٗ
عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۷﴾ سَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَآ اَشْرَكْنَا وَ لَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَ لَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتّٰى ذَاقُوْا بَاْسَنَا ؕ قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوْهُ لَنَا ؕ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا
تَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۸﴾ قُلْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ ۚ فَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۹﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَدَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
حَرَّمَ هٰذَا ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَلَا تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَ هُمْ
بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۰﴾ قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ اَلَّا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّ بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۚ وَ لَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ
مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَ اِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَ لَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَ مَا بَطَنَ ۚ وَ لَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا
بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۱﴾ وَ لَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۚ وَ اَوْفُوا
الْكَيْلَ وَ الْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ وَ اِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوْا وَ لَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ۚ وَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اَوْفُوْا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ
وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۲﴾ وَ اَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِيْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ ۚ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ

ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِيْٓ اَحْسَنَ وَ تَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً
لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَ هٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَ اتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ
الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَ اِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْا لَوْ اَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى
مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ صَدَفَ عَنْهَا ؕ سَنَجْزِي الَّذِيْنَ
يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ رَبُّكَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ
بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ اَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِيْٓ اِيْمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ؕ
قُلِ انْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَ كَانُوْا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَمْرُهُمْ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ
يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ عَشْرُ اَمْثَالِهَا ۚ وَ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَ هُمْ لَا
يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ قُلْ اِنَّنِيْ هَدٰىنِيْ رَبِّيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۚ دِيْنًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَ مَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾
قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِيْ وَ نُسُكِيْ وَ مَحْيَايَ وَ مَمَاتِيْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ ۚ وَ بِذٰلِكَ اُمِرْتُ وَ اَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾
قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِيْ رَبًّا وَّ هُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَ لَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ اِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَ لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ
مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ وَ رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ
لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

And it is God Who has created orchards; some are creepers and others not. And He created date-palms and crops of different sorts. And olives and pomegranates, alike and different to one another as well. Benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest. And do not commit excess. God does not like those who commit excess. And He has animals of tall stature and of short one too. So benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is your inveterate foe. (141-142)

Take eight kinds of four-legged animals: two from the species of the sheep and two from the species of the goat. Then ask them: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Answer me with some proof if you are truthful. Similarly, take two from the camel both male and female and two from the cow both male and female. Then ask: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Were you present at the time when God directed you about this? Then who can be more unjust than the person who fabricated a lie on God so that he can lead people astray without any knowledge? Indeed, God shall not guide the unjust. (143-144)

Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else's name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (145)

And for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a bone. This is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness and We are absolutely truthful. Thus if they deny you even after this, then say: Very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers. (146-147)

The polytheists will now say: "Had God willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have declared anything as unlawful." In a similar way, those before them also denied until they tasted Our punishment. Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations. Tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you. Say: Bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited. Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord. (148-150)

Say: Come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you: do not associate anything with Him, treat your parents with kindness and kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide you also and provide them too. And do not even go near vulgarities whether they are open or hidden. And do not kill without justification any soul forbidden by God. These are the things God directs you to so that you understand. And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him until he reaches maturity. And weigh with honesty and full measure. We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear. And when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives. And fulfil God's promise. These are the things He has directed you to so that you receive a reminder and that: "Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord." These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain secure from His punishment. (151-153)

Then We then gave Moses the Book to complete My favour on him who was thorough, as an explanation of everything, and as guidance and mercy so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord. (154)

And this blessed Book that We have revealed, follow it and fear [God] so that you are shown mercy. Lest you say: "The Book was revealed to only the two earlier communities and we had no knowledge of its reading and teaching." Or say: "Had the

Book been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than them.” Thus a conclusive argument and a guidance and mercy have come to you from your Lord. So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion. They are only waiting for the angels or your Lord to come to them or a special sign from among the signs of your Lord appear to them. The day such a sign of your Lord manifests itself, the faith of a person will not be of any benefit to him who did not accept it earlier or did not earn pious deeds from his faith. Say: Wait; we too are waiting. (155-158)

You have no link with those who created divisions in their religion and split themselves into sects. Their matter rests with God alone. So, He alone will gather them; then tell them what they had been doing. He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them. (159-160)

Say: My Lord has guided me to a straight path – the upright faith which is the path of Abraham’s religion, who was fully devoted and was not among the idolaters. Say: My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the Universe. He has no associate and thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit. Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything? And each soul gets what it earns and no soul shall bear another’s burden. Then to your Lord shall you return. Thus, He will tell you in what you have been differing. And it is He who has made you successors of one another in the earth and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you. Indeed, very swift is your Lord in retribution also and is also Forgiving and Merciful. (161-165)

Explanation

وَ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّ غَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّ النَّخْلَ وَ الزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ وَ الزَّيْتُوْنَ وَ الرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّ غَيْرَ
مُتَشَابِهٍ ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَ اٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ ۖ وَ لَا تُسْرِفُوْا ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ حَمُوْلَةً
وَّ فَرْشًا ؕ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾[103]

The question implied is regarding the basis they have associated partners with God when crops and orchards have been made by Him.

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[103] And it is God Who has created orchards; some are creepers and others not. And He created date-palms and crops of different sorts. And olives and pomegranates, alike and different to one another as well. Benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest. And do not commit excess. God does not like those who commit excess. And He has animals of tall stature and of short one too. So benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is your inveterate foe.

مَّعۡرُوۡشٰتٍ refers to grapes etc whose creepers are made to climb fences and غَيۡرَ مَعۡرُوۡشٰتٍ refers to those things that are not dependent on fences. With reference to the creepers of grapes, I am inclined to think that غَيۡرَ مَعۡرُوۡشٰتٍ refers to creepers which grow and develop horizontally along the surface of the earth like melons, water-melons and cucumbers.

In verse 28 of Sūrah ‘Abas both عنب and قضب are mentioned together. The former refers to grapes and the latter to vegetables that are eaten while being fresh.

It should be kept in mind that the variation in orchards and crops and in their types and numbers are specifically referred to here for some particular objectives.

Firstly, He Who has created all this is very generous and magnanimous, affectionate and caring. If He placed the need for food in people, He did not produce food merely to fill their bellies; on the contrary, He created a wide variety of foods. If He brought forth orchards, then they had a very large assortment. The dates and grains produced by Him were of so many types. Fruits including olives and pomegranates were produced in different kinds. It needs to be appreciated that such diversity, colour, kind and variation was not needed to keep people alive. However, the Creator of this world embellished it with such an innumerable range of products for us even though He Himself did not need us in any way. For those who think and reflect, the question arises: Why? The answer to this is that people come to know that their Lord is very magnanimous and merciful Who blessed them with these favours even though they are not entitled to them. The objective is that they realize from the bottom of their hearts to be grateful to God and also the obligations they owe to Him. This gratitude and sensitivity to acknowledge the truth is the basis of religion.

Secondly, all these blessings and favours of God in nourishing and nurturing us impose a very heavy responsibility on us: we must keep in mind that He Who has created all this for us will necessarily bring about a day in which He will question us if we have fulfilled the requisites of loyalty to Him and then reward or punish us accordingly. This questioning is on the basis of the principle that every privilege imposes responsibility. That both necessitate one another is an obvious fact of human nature. Every sensitive person acknowledges this. Only the mean and the wretched benefit from God's favours but do not feel responsible to be answerable for them.

Thirdly, evident in every part of this universe is unity in multiplicity, harmony in diversity, accord in discord. The same mud, air and water yield different types of produce in different colours, tastes, odours and heights. Moreover, all these are favours that satisfy man's taste buds and provide him with sustenance. It is clearly evident that the Creator Who has created in us the need for glucose and iron has filled pomegranates and grapes with juice which provides us with these needs. He Who has created taste buds in us has provided us with edibles to satisfy them. He Who has blessed our eyes to appreciate beauty and splendour has made everything around us an embodiment of beauty, splendour and majesty to everything. It is to this unity in the apparent disunity and diversity between various things that the Qur'ān has directed our attention. This aspect points to the Creator of this universe and to the oneness of its governor. I have referred to this earlier under verses 99-101. People who would like more details should read my treatise "Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism" in which these issues are discussed comprehensively.

The very existence of these favours invite people to what is said thus: "benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest." Prophets of God also have invited them to this and human nature too bears witness to it if it has not been distorted.

In the expression وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ, the antecedent of the pronoun in حَقَّهٗ can be God and it can also be the fruit. However, in both cases, there will not be much difference in meaning. Every favour of God necessarily entails that he who receives it must also share it with others who are without it. This is a requisite of the gratitude he owes to it. It is this right which is called God's right. Its awareness is found inside human nature. Ever since the inception of mankind, this awareness has existed in it. The offering of his livestock to the Almighty made by Adam's son Abel was for this very purpose. It is to fulfil this right that in the *sharī'ah* of the Israelites and later the Ishmaelites a formal system of *zakāh* was instituted.

It is evident from the phrase يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ that this right should be discharged at the time of the harvest from the produce. The reason is that this right in fact is an expression of gratitude of God's favour received by a farmer. For this reason, Islam has imposed the right of *zakāh* on produce and this precisely is in accordance with human nature and intellect. In current times, while mimicking other nations, Muslims too have adopted an un-Islamic financial system. For this reason, an Islamic government collect taxes instead of *zakāh*. Taxation is against the justice and the blessing found in the system of *zakāh.*

Though the pronoun in the expression مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ is singular, yet it refers to all the things enumerated. In Arabic, when a pronoun or a verb occurs in the singular, then the purpose is to refer to each and every entity individually. It is evident from this that in Islam God has a right in every produce whatever the thing; only a certain amount is exempt. The *sharī'ah* has given exemption in a certain quantity of produce with regard to the needs of the producer. Details of this can be found in books of *fiqh*.[104]

The expression اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ does not merely relate to كُلُوْا; it also relates to اٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ. In other words, just as benefit can only be obtained from produce if it is actually produced, *zakāh* will only be imposed on it if it is produced and collected for consumption. This further strengthens the inference that *zakāh* is to be imposed on production and not on the land which is a means of production. Thus the Islamic system of *zakāh* is based on this very principle.

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[104] Jurists do not regard certain entities to zakatable, which is beyond my comprehension. If something is produced in a very limited amount merely for household consumption, this exemption is understandable. However, if any of these entities is cultivated in a large amount or if the thing produced is done at the national level, why should it be exempted from *zakāh*?

The words "and do not commit excess; God does not like those who commit excess" depict the same directive after people are told to pay what is due from the produce as can be seen on verses 26-27 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl: وَاٰتِ ذَاالْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَ لَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيْرًا اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ؕ وَ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ كَفُوْرًا.[105] This directive was essential because the fulfilment of rights is based on a person being moderate and frugal in his needs and desires. A person who is extravagant and a spendthrift will not be able to fulfil the expenses of his own interests; so how will he fulfil the rights of others. Satan lures wealthy people foremost in this manner. He entices them into various desires and wishes and these people become such slaves to their desires and luxurious ways that these things become even more than necessities for them. How can such people think that the wealth which is scarcely enough to fulfil their extravagance also has a share for other people of God. As a result dogs, falcons and hawks of such people live in luxury while their neighbours sleep in hunger.

The tall and short statured animals referred by the verses are the ones which are appropriate as means transport and as a beasts of burden like camels, horses and mules etc.

The word الفرش refers to the land which has abundant vegetation and also to cultivated land that has not yet fully sprouted. With respect to beasts, it refers to those short statured animals which are not appropriate as a means of transport or as beasts of burden; they are only appropriate for slaughtering and other needs likes goats and rams. Concomitant indications show that also included in this are short statured camels and buffaloes. However, here this verse is used in contrast to حَمُوْلَةً. Hence it necessarily refers to short-statured beasts.

It may be noted that while mentioning orchards and cultivated lands, the words used are: مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّ غَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ. In contrast, the words used for animals are حَمُوْلَةً and فَرْشًا. This is a very elegant comparison. In other words, just as in the orchards there are creepers that grow on vertical supports as well as those which spread along the ground, in a similar way, among animals there are those that are of tall stature like camels, horses and mules etc and those which pick their fodder from the ground like sheep, cattle and other animals of short stature and they give benefit to human beings through their wool, hides, milk and meat etc.

Just as there is this correspondence in the choice of words, readers may also note correspondence in meaning: it has been referred to earlier that one aspect of God's favours is their variety and assortment, which bears evidence to His providence, mercy and blessing; moreover, this evidence, as alluded to earlier, is a very significant evidence drawn from within the being of a person and the world around him in favour of monotheism and the hereafter. The same evidence is pointed out here through the variety found in quadruped animals. This is actually meant to stimulate human thought if only people reflect.

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[105] And give to the near of kin his due, and also to the destitute and the traveller. And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are brothers of devils; and the Devil is extremely ungrateful to his Lord.

Consider now the words "so benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan; indeed, he is your inveterate foe." Just as in the earlier verse, after mentioning favours, it was stated: "benefit from these fruits when they ripen" in a similar way the obligation owed to favour bestowed in the form of quadruped animals is "so benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you." Since all this is evident from the context and moreover they were also mentioned earlier, there was no need to repeat it here. However, people were warned of the trials of Satan and warned not to follow him because he has already openly given an ultimatum to human beings that he will lead people astray and people will as a result regard things lawful and unlawful of their own selves and offer and sacrifice quadruped animals blessed to them before idols. Thus in verse s 118-119 of Sūrah al-Nisā', it is stated: وَ قَالَ لَاَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا وَّ لَاُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَ لَاُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَ لَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْاَنْعَامِ (He said: "I shall grab a certain number of your people come what may. I shall definitely lead them astray, implicate them in desires, teach them so that they will slit the ears of cattle). The tactics of Satan to grab the favours mentioned earlier are stated with regard to excessive and to needless spending. Here his polytheistic whispering are mentioned and both these types of onslaughts of Satan have proven to be very effective.

The word أكل and رزق are mentioned in this verse is their wider connotations. The former implies what is benefited and used and the latter to God's sustenance.

ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّاْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ
الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ نَبِّـُٔوْنِيْ بِعِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۳﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ
الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ اَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ اِذْ وَصّٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ
كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۴﴾[106]

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[106] Take eight kinds of four-legged animals: two from the species of the sheep and two from the species of the goat. Then ask them: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Answer me with some proof if you are truthful. Similarly, take two from the camel both male and female and two from the cow both male and female. Then ask: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Were you present at the time when God directed you about this? Then

The word ثَمٰنِيَةَ is in the accusative because of a suppressed verb. People have generally regarded a verb of the past tense to be suppressed here. However, in my opinion, the occasion demands the suppression of an imperative verb.

Just as the word زوج is used for a pair, it is also used to denote one member of a pair. Examples of this usage are found both in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic literature.

Amongst the domesticated animals in Arabia, there were four whose milk and meat were consumed. Among the smaller ones were the goat and the ram and among the larger ones were the cow[107] and the camel. The Qur'ān used the word أنعام for these quadruped animals. When this word is annexed to the noun بهيمة, it includes wild animals which though are not domesticated, but are still subsumed under the category of أنعام. They include the deer, wild goats, antelopes and zebras etc.

Since the lawfulness and unlawfulness of domesticated quadruped animals is under discussion here, the Arabs regarded some among them to be lawful and others unlawful under the influence of their polytheistic superstitions. For this reason, the Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to take one member of each of them and inquire from the Quraysh about their lawfulness. The Prophet (sws) is also directed to ask them to reply to him on the basis of some logical or scriptural proof.

These well-known quadruped animals as has been indicated earlier were camels, cows, goats and rams. If their males and females are accounted for, they come out to be eight. The question posed in the verse is meant to jolt these people that if all these animals are lawful, how can they claim some of their components to be unlawful. As a result of this verdict, they declare some to be unlawful for consumption and some prohibited for transport; some lawful only for men and some only for women and some for both. Human nature and intellect entail that if a tree is lawful, then its fruit should also be lawful.

The proof referred to in "answer me with some proof if you are truthful" can be of two types: one of them could be proof from Abraham's religion and the other some natural or logical one. If none of these exist, then what does it mean to regard certain animals to be prohibited. It may be kept in mind that the only argument the Arabs presented in favour of their idolatrous superstitions and traditions is cited in verse 148 ahead: "had God wanted, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have regarded anything as unlawful." Obviously, this is neither logical evidence nor scriptural one. If it at all it is some evidence, then every foolish person can present it to validate his foolishness. Forefathers adopting something is no proof of its veracity or its ascription to Abraham (sws). How can it be believed as true that whatever their forefathers adopted was on the basis of some solid

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who can be more unjust than the person who fabricated a lie on God so that he can lead people astray without any knowledge? Indeed, God shall not guide the unjust.

[107] Buffaloes were not found in Arabia because they generally live in warm and humid weather.

proof, especially when Arab traditions themselves show that just as Paul had distorted the religion of Jesus (sws), polytheism was inducted among Arabs by a person called ‘Amr ibn Lūhyī. The Qur’ān has presented both logical and scriptural arguments to refute these superstitions of the Arabs. On the one hand, it has presented the complete written evidence from Abraham’s life found in the Torah every word of which bears witness that he did not have any link with polytheism and polytheistic traditions and had wiped out the minutest germs of polytheism by his words and deeds. On the other hand, it has purely logical and natural arguments in favour of monotheism which are both irrefutable and which, as is evident from the previous sections of this *sūrah*, have been presented by Abraham (sws). How huge is this difference between these supremely convincing arguments presented by the Qur’an and this statement of the Arabs that they found their forefathers adhering to polytheism and hence this precisely is the God’s religion and Abraham’s way.

The question: “were you present at the time when God directed you about this?” is the final nail in the coffin. The implied meaning is that they do not have any logical or scriptural arguments; so on what grounds do they impute this falsehood to God that He has forbidden such and such things. Were they present when God forbade them? Hence who can be more wretched and unjust than those who without any such arguments use false accusations to lead people astray?

The “unjust” in “indeed, God shall not guide the unjust” refer to these very people. They are one who are so unjust as to not only make a self-fabricated falsity a means of going astray but also leading others astray. The people who are implied to here are the religious leaders of the Quraysh. The campaign they were maliciously running to lead people astray was based on falsehood and hence would miserably fail. This in other words also forms glad tidings of success of the Islamic mission.

قُلْ لَّآ اَجِدُ فِيْ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطْعَمُهٗٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَيْتَةً اَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوْحًا اَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيْرٍ فَاِنَّهٗ رِجْسٌ اَوْ
فِسْقًا اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِيْ
ظُفُرٍ ۚ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُوْمَهُمَآ اِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُوْرُهُمَآ اَوِ الْحَوَايَآ اَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ
بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُوْ رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ ۚ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُهٗ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ [108]

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108. Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else’s name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a

This is a proclamation from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) about animals that were prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws). It is evident from the earlier sections that the ongoing discussion with the polytheists of Arabia is regarding Abraham's religion and this discussion too specially relates to quadruped animals because the Arabs under their polytheistic superstitions had regarded some to be unlawful. This context and occasion entail that the proclamation be understood in this background. People have severed these verses from this context and presented it as a principle proclamation of what is lawful and unlawful in Islam. Because of this misconception they have ended up in confusion themselves and confused others too. This is because not just the things mentioned in this verse are forbidden in Islam but others too like carnivorous beasts and birds used for hunting. However, here since the context relates to quadruped animals only, it has been clarified that what the Idolaters have regarded to be unlawful are their own self-created fabrications because the revelation received by the Prophet (sws) in this regard does not contain these prohibitions.

The encompassing style: "to a person who eats things which are edible" refute the superstitions of the Idolaters about certain animals and sacrifices: they contended that only some could touch them and others could not. Moreover, as indicated in verses 138 and 139 earlier, the flesh of certain animals could only be consumed by men; women were forbidden to do so. The Qur'ān has specified here that just as their polytheistic sacrifices are baseless, this discrimination in their consumption too is fictitious and has no link with Abraham's religion.

This verse mentions the prohibition of four things: carrion, blood poured forth, flesh of the swine and animals slaughtered in the name of someone other than God. The prohibition of the first three of these is because of their apparent filth. After that, it is stated "because these are indeed unclean." This is because when a singular pronoun is used the way it is here (فَاِنَّهٗ رِجۡسٌ), it refers individually to each of these three is referred to, as has already been pointed out under verse 141. The last mentioned prohibition relates to inward filth. Slaughtering an animal in someone's name other than God is polytheism which in beliefs is no less than a filth. For this, he who is afflicted by polytheism also becomes filthy. This filth in beliefs is signified by the word "disobedience" (فسق). It is evident from this that the lawfulness and unlawfulness of things in Abraham's religion are not just on the basis of a divine directive, they are also based on human nature and intellect. These prohibitions as well as the exception mentioned in this verse regarding their consumption when a person is driven to necessity have been discussed by me at many other instances. Hence there is no need

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bone. This is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness and We are absolutely truthful. Thus if they deny you even after this, then say: Very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers.

left to go into their details here.

Here this basic principle of what is lawful and unlawful should remain our minds that in the religion of Abraham (sws) all pure and wholesome things were lawful and all impure ones were unlawful ones regardless of the fact whether the impurity was internal or external. Islam also subscribes to this basic principle because, contrary to Judaism and Christianity, it is based on Abraham's religion. I will explain the Islamic principle of what is lawful and what is not ahead.

After the religion of Abraham (sws), Judaism is mentioned by the words "and for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a bone." It is evident from this list that some pure and wholesome things too were forbidden to them. However, this was solely as a punishment of their rebelliousness. The implied meaning is that now in Islam, these prohibitions no longer remain; all pure and wholesome things stand allowed. It may also be kept in mind that the Jews were promised that all these restrictions will be lifted from them by the last messenger of God.

Here are some excerpts from the Torah that describe the afore-mentioned prohibitions to the Jews.

> The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. [24] The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which a food offering may be presented to the LORD must be cut off from their people. (Leviticus, 7: 22-25)

> From what you offer you are to present this food offering to the LORD: the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys. The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's. (Leviticus 3:15-16)

It is evident from the words of the Qur'ān that except for the fat that was a component of the meat and was part of the back, intestines and bones in a way that it could not be easily separated, all other fat of an animals' body was prohibited. This seems quite logical. However, it is evident from the afore-mentioned excerpts of the Torah that the fat was prohibited in its absolute sense. In my opinion, this harsh and strict view is actually of the rabbis and scholars of the Jews which is an addition to the already harsh and strict structure of their *sharīʻah*. Even some blood sticks with the meat, let alone fate. For this reason, the expression "blood poured forth" is used so that the restriction remains within natural limits.

The ظُفُر word means "nails." Some people are of the opinion that the nails of animals that do not hunt are called ظُفُر and the nails of those that do are called مخلب.

It is evident from the details of what is lawful and unlawful found in the Torah that among the Jews, only those quadruped animals were lawful which had split hooves and which chewed the cud. Animals in which any of these two conditions did not exist were regarded as unlawful. Thus camels, rabbits and badgers and all other animals which do not have a split hoof were considered unlawful by the Jews. In the light of this, it can be said that the word ذِىْ ظُفُرٍ refers to animals whose hooves are not split and are intact but have some nails in front. All such animals were unlawful to the Jews in the absolute sense, as is evident from the word كُلّ (all). For this reason, some animals like the rabbit and the camel were also rendered unlawful to them even though they were lawful in Abraham's religion.

The words "this is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness" imply that animals with nails and the fat were not unlawful to the Jews because they had some intrinsic reason for prohibition. Their prohibition related to the rebellious nature of the Jews. Just as in some cases, a doctor stops a patient from consuming what is perfectly lawful and allowed since it may potentially harm him, for the same reason, the Almighty punished the Jews because of their moral misconduct by prohibiting many things to them which were otherwise lawful. The Qur'ānic word used for this moral misconduct is بغى (rebelliousness). This rebelliousness of the Israelites has been mentioned at so many instances in the Torah and in the scriptures of the prophets that a person literally feels bored to read them at length. There is not a single directive of religion which they whole-heartedly accepted. In the first place, they would make each directive more burdensome to follow because of repeated questions. An example of this has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah regarding the cow. Even after consenting to follow the directive, they tried to evade it in so many ways that it practically was rendered ineffective. This escapist mentality and rebellious attitude also impacted their *sharī'ah*. Just as the master of an unruly animal ties it in strong fetters to control it or the ruler of rebellious subjects is compelled to impose strong restrictions on them, in the same way, God imposed very stern laws on them termed as "burdens and shackles" by the Qur'ān (7:157). If one reads the directives of *sharī'ah* of the Israelites in the Torah, one feels nausea. Notwithstanding others, if only the chapters on cleanliness are read and seen what toil and labour they had to go through during the menstrual and puerperal cycles, ceremonial impurity or ailments like leprosy and spermatorrhea, every hair of a person becomes grateful to the Lord Who through His last messenger gave mankind the guidance that was free from unnatural restrictions. The Israelites did not forbid themselves just what has been just stated; these only related to quadruped animals. They had much severer restrictions regarding sea animals. It is evident from the eleventh chapter of Leviticus that sea animals having fins and scales were lawful and all the rest were forbidden. Similarly, it was not just the hunting birds that were forbidden; ducks, herons and linsangs were also forbidden.

The reason for prohibition of these animals, as has been referred to earlier, is the rebelliousness of the Jews. In Sūrah Mā'idah, while giving them these directives, God had said to the Jews that if they profess faith in the last messenger, these burdens would be lifted from them. This is because he will preach the religion of Abraham (sws) which is in harmony with human nature and has no unnatural restrictions.

The purpose in God emphasizing that He is truthful is not merely an expression of this reality; it also indicates that His adversaries are liars. The implication is that God is truthful in whatever He has stated about the nation of Abraham and the *sharī'ah* of the Israelites, and Jews and Christians who are indulging in this frivolous talk are absolute liars.

Consider next the part: "thus if they deny you even after this, then say: very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers." This is a warning sounded to both the Quraysh and the Israelites. The Almighty is vast in mercy and hence gives the rebellious and the stubborn a lot of a respite so that they are not left with any excuse. Thus they should not become arrogant because of this respite. It does delay God's punishment but does not ward off His established practice regarding wrongdoers.

It has become fully evident from the details of what is unlawful in the *sharī'ah* of Abraham and the Israelites mentioned earlier that the Idolaters had regarded many things to be forbidden without any proof. This prohibition had no link with Abraham's religion. In a similar way, the Jews regarded many things to be forbidden which were not prohibited because of any intrinsic reason; it was only because of their rebelliousness that they were forbidden to them, and as per the promise of God these restrictions would be lifted from them through the last messenger. Thus, as has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'idah, they were actually lifted. Now in this last religion only those things are prohibited which should be prohibited as per the norms of human nature and intellect. This religion is devoid of the innovations of the Idolaters and the extremities of the Jews.

Presented briefly below are the Islamic principles of what is lawful and what is not, as mentioned in the Qur'ān.

The foundational principle in this regard is that all pure and wholesome things are lawful and vice versa. Thus Muḥammad (sws) is introduced in the Qur'ān in the following words:

يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهٰهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَ يُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَ يَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَ
الْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ (٧: ١٥٧)

> He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. (7:157)

The word طَّيِّبٰت (pure) refers to things which because of their nature and effect on human beings are beneficial, moderate and wholesome. By the same token خَبٰٓئِث (impure) are things which because of their nature and impact on human beings are harmful and injurious. The degree of purity and impurity in each thing could be different. As a result of this variation, the degree of a directive may change regarding two things: one would be prohibited and the other undesirable.

Similarly, at times, something may not be impure intrinsically; however, something extrinsic to it makes it impure. For example, an animal sacrificed in the name of some deity, meat obtained from gambling or a prey hunted in the state of *iḥrām*.

It is not correct to believe that things are pure and impure merely on relative grounds and there is no natural, logical or moral basis for this. To regard something to be prohibited for one nation and allowed for the other is mere scepticism. This is tantamount to saying that justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, right and wrong are relative and they have no logical or natural basis.

It is on this principle that Islam has regarded all those quadruped animals as انعام. When this word is annexed to the noun بهيمة, it includes wild animals which though are not domesticated, but are still subsumed under the category of أنعام. They include the deer, wild goats, deer, antelopes and zebras etc. However, predators will not be included in them like the lion, the dog, the bear, the wolf etc. Thus the Prophet (sws) regarded predators to be prohibited. Similar is the case of carrion, swine, blood poured forth and animals slaughtered in the name of other deities. This is because they carry filth and impurity – some in the apparent sense and some in the logical sense,

The same principle will be applied on the birds. Those which are of the category of predators like eagles, falcons and hawks or if they have a certain type of impurity mentioned above will be regarded as prohibited.

Similar will be the principle for sea animals and insects.

The case of vegetables or things that are made from them will be no different. For example, alcohol prepared from everything will be prohibited because it has logical and moral impurity.

Stated above is the actual principle of what is lawful and what is not. In the light of this, it is not difficult to say that both are evident. However, since there are unlimited types of quadruped animals, birds, and sea-animals in this world, there can be a difference of opinion in many of these. Thus such difference of opinion does exist among our jurists and can be seen in books of jurisprudence. Some regard certain animals to be predators and others do not. Similarly, some jurists regard some things to be impure and some do not. In my opinion, the views of the Hanifite jurists hold the greatest harmony with the Qur'ānic principles of what is lawful. However, the right way in such issues in which it is possible to differ is that a person should stay away from grey areas if he thinks that they are dubious but should not regard others to be committing something wrong if they hold a different opinion. In this regard, the attitude of the Prophet (sws) regarding not eating of the lizard mentioned in narratives gives us the best guidance.

However, one thing must be kept in mind here: it is stated about some companions in certain books that they regarded only four things that are mentioned earlier to be prohibited. This view does is not correct in any sense and it has been wrongly ascribed to them by some narrators. This is beyond logic. What some of them may have actually said would be that in the religion of Abraham (sws) only four things among quadruped animals are forbidden. This view obviously is true in a certain background, as has been explained earlier. It seems that this was precisely what they said by them and it somehow got distorted.

سَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَآ اَشْرَكْنَا وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتّٰى ذَاقُوْا
بَاْسَنَا ؕ قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوْهُ لَنَا ؕ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا تَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۱۴۸﴾ قُلْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْحُجَّةُ
الْبَالِغَةُ ۚ فَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۹﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَدَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَ هٰذَا ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَلَا
تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۰﴾[109]

These verses cite the final argument raised by the Idolaters and then respond to it. Obviously, the argument is absolutely foolish. If people have the freedom to express certain views and do certain deeds, this does not mean that these views and deeds are correct. If this is an argument, then every foolish individual can cite it in his support. No different is the case of any oppressor or a rogue. Such people can always argue that what they did or are doing is at God's behest. They are told that this argument is just a prank and an excuse to adhere to their stubbornness. Prior to them, their predecessors also adopted this attitude and were ultimately punished for this by God and their own fate will be no different. So the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves.

Consider next, the words "Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations." The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that the means of knowing God's like and dislike are not their deeds so that whatever they do they will be rewarded by Him. For

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[109] The polytheists will now say: "Had God willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have declared anything as unlawful." In a similar way, those before them also denied until they tasted Our punishment. Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations. Tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you. Say: Bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited. Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord.

this, some proof is needed: either it should be based on a verifiable directive of God or any evidence from human nature or intellect should exist to support it. They do not have either of these proofs and are merely conjecturing, and conjecture and never replace knowledge.

The words “tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you” depict God’s established practice about providing guidance: He does not force guidance upon people; had He wanted this, none could have stopped Him. He provides guidance through arguments and reasoning and has given people the freedom to choose or reject it. Thus He has delivered to them His conclusive argument through His messenger. They have mere conjecture and speculation with them but God has strong and convincing arguments if they open their ears and minds to listen and understand them. Reasoning alone is the path to guidance; not any use of force.

The words: “say: bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited” ask them what to do instead of speculating. It may be kept in mind that logical evidence can only be presented on two bases: personal observation or knowledge and some natural or intellectual ground whose example can be seen in verses 26-28 of Sūrah Yūsuf. Here the Qur’ān has demanded both these types of evidence. If they cannot provide this, they should accept the conclusive argument the Qur’ān is presenting before them.

Consider next the words: “Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord.” Their innovations are signified by the word “desires.” This is because something that does not have any logical or scriptural justification can only be based on whims and desires and the fate of such people who are guided by their desires is known. Here, three of their characteristics are referred to. First, they deny God’s revelations. Second, they do not believe in the hereafter. Third, they are guilty of polytheism. The purpose is to show that people who are so rebellious that neither God or His verses nor the hereafter have any value before them, who can imagine where these desires of such people will lead them to.

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ اَلَّا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْئًا وَّ بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۚ وَ لَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ
نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَاِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ
بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۚ وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ
لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ وَاِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوْا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ۚ وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اَوْفُوْا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۙ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَ

اَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِیْ مُسْتَقِیْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِیْلِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۳﴾[110]

These verses state the real religion of Abraham (sws) in detail. It is declared through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that these people should not think that by regarding certain lawful things of Abraham's religion to be unlawful because of their polytheistic superstitions nothing else is the part of this religion and that they have fulfilled their obligation towards it. The fact is that many other directives of this religion related to the rights God and His creatures that are unlawful have been adopted by them. So, they should now hear out the Prophet (sws) what he has to say in this regard. The first of these unlawful things is polytheism. Yet they have adopted it as their religion.

After God, parents have the greatest right. Their right is mentioned under the right of God but in a positive way, ie. "treat your parents with kindness." The novelty of style in the verses under discussion may be kept in mind in that some directives are stated in a positive way and some in a negative one. For example, polytheism, murder of children, lewd acts, killing, consuming the wealth of children are mentioned in a negative way. On the other hand, kindness to parents, measuring and weighing honestly, justice in words and deeds and keeping promises are stated in a positive way. Exactly the same style has been adopted in these directives in verses 22-38 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. The reason for this is that the deduction of the positive from the negative and vice versa is an obvious phenomenon. When a thing is mentioned in a positive way by urging people to adopt it, then it necessarily means that what is opposite to it is prohibited. Similarly, if a thing is prohibited, then it automatically means that its opposite should be adopted. In other words, if polytheism is prohibited, then monotheism should be adopted. Likewise, if it is said that the rights of the parents should be fulfilled, it means that their unkind treatment is forbidden. In the light of this style, all directives which are stated in a positive way but are under حَرَّمَ as far as the construction of the discourse is concerned, their opposites should also be kept in mind. Thus the whole sentence would be to the effect: "neither show

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[110] Say: Come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you: do not associate anything with Him, treat your parents with kindness and kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide you also and provide them too. And do not even go near vulgarities whether they are open or hidden. And do not kill without justification any soul forbidden by God. These are the things God directs you to so that you understand. And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him until he reaches maturity. And weigh with honesty and full measure. We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear. And when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives. And fulfil God's promise. These are the things He has directed you to so that you receive a reminder and that: "Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord." These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain secure from His punishment.

disrespect to the parents nor scold them; in fact, be kind to them." The advantage of this style is that what is needed to be stated with stress is cited in words and its opposite is deemed to be understood from the style of the discourse as its natural consequence. At some instances, the Qur'ān has revealed the tacit implications of this style as well. For example, what is stated here is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl thus:

وَقَضٰى رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ؕ اِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَوْ كِلٰهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَّهُمَآ اُفٍّ
وَّلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيْمًا. وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيٰنِيْ صَغِيْرًا.

(١٧: ٢٣ -٢٤)

> And your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to treat well your parents. If either or both of them attain old age in your life before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them while answering; but speak to them with good etiquette and treat them with humility and tenderness and say: "Lord, be merciful to them the way they nursed me in childhood." (17:23-24)

Consider next: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ. The word إملاق means "poverty." In verse 31 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, the expression used is: خشية إملاق. In other words, it is said that the fear of providing food for children and grooming them should not lead to killing them. It may be kept in mind that one form of killing children in Arabia was related to polytheistic superstitions, as referred to earlier. A second form found in some tribes was that they would bury alive their infant girls because of an overblown spirit of honour. The third related to killing them for fear of poverty, as mentioned here. Even today, we hear of such heinous and brutal killings in some countries that are extremely poor or inflicted with some calamity. The reason for this ghastly act is that a human being thinks that he is the actual provider of himself and those linked with him. The fact is that every person is created and sustained by God alone. Human beings just become a means of this sustenance. Children are primarily entrusted by God in the custodianship of their parents. It is their obligation to fulfil the responsibilities imposed on them regarding their children as far as they can on the basis of sense and reason as well as religion. Never should the parents think that they are the actual sustainers of their children. On the contrary, it is God Who not only provides the children but also the parents. The milk with which a mother feeds her child is not actually provided by her; it is God Who is its source. When this is so, what right have the parents to perpetrate this inhuman crime?

Like individuals, sometimes governments too cross their limits and bounds and enter the sacred domain of God. The result of this transgression is that instead of being beneficial to their citizens, they end up fighting against nature and their creator. For a concsientious government, it is very much befitting that in order to improve the means of livelihood for its citizens, it rummages through every nook and corner of its territory both land and sea to provide them with resources and livelihood. This too is its natural, in fact, religious responsibility to instruct and educate the masses in every sphere of life, whether public or private, individual or collective to be cautious, moderate, pro-hygiene and hard-working. However, it would be exceeding limits if a government starts ordering them to produce a certain amount of children in line with the resources it can generate for them. It thinks that any number beyond the prescribed amount would be unwelcome and in fact would not be allowed to come into being by using birth control techniques.

It can thus be seen that the grave misconception with which the cruel Arab tribes of *jāhiliyyah* were inflicted is no different from the one today's civilized governments are guilty of. They too were angry with God that when He is not providing them enough why is He increasing their population with such speed? They would vent this anger by killing their children. The modern man too furiously contemplates that when he has not been able to attain a certain standard of living, why should he bear the responsibilities of others? In this consternation, modern governments have hatched the scheme of family-planning. The form has only changed. The Arabs were uncivilized and unkempt, and the method they adopted was in line with their unruliness. Today, people are refined and cultured and hence they have adopted a sophisticated way to deal with the same problem. The philosophy of both is the same: both regard themselves to be the providers of sustenance. It is God, in fact, who sustains everyone. The Qur'ān corrected the mistake of the Arabs and they understood it too. However, who can convince the cultured minds of today?

The word الْفَوَاحِشَ in وَ لَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَ مَا بَطَنَ means "open lewdness." The primary form of it is adultery or fornication. Thus in verse 32 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, the words used are: وَلَا تَقۡرَبُوا الزِّنٰۤى اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيۡلًا (and do not even go near adultery; it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path). The words لَا تَقۡرَبُوۡا are used by the Qur'ān for those wrongdoings of which even a shadow is destructive for a person, which are not only dangerous themselves but the motives of which are also equally dangerous, which shower their filth on him from a very long distance and then engulf a person in such a manner that it becomes impossible for him to disengage himself from them. A person can only succeed to protect himself from such wrongdoings when he fully protects his eyes, tongue and heart and is able to clog every hole from which it can creep up to him and stays short of every place that can cause him to stumble.

It is in order to fulfil the requisites of this لَا تَقۡرَبُوۡا (do not even go near) that the Qur'ān has imposed many restrictions on men and women, the details of which are mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb and Sūrah al-Nūr. In their explanation, I will mention all the details *inshaAllāh*.

It should be kept in mind about virtue and vice that their real source is the heart. For this reason, no virtue develops unless it is deeply rooted in the heart. Similarly, a vice cannot be gotten rid of unless it is uprooted from the heart. If some vice is found in the heart it will continue to be nurtured through the eye, the ear, the tongue and thoughts until it becomes a spiritual cancer. Even if it may never materialize practically, it grips the mind and heart of a person in such a way that the strongest effort of self-cleansing ends up in vain. This results in the moral and spiritual death of a person. For this reason, the Qur'ān has asked the believers to stay away from both inner and outer forms of lewdness.

Every soul is sacred. Hence, the words used are حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ (what God has regarded as sacred) in the sentence وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ. The only exception to this is that the life of a soul can be taken in accordance with the *sharī‘ah* because of an offence it commits. For example, if someone has murdered someone or if someone is guilty of rebelling against God and His messenger or if someone has committed adultery (whose punishment is death by stoning). Without such offences, killing someone is not justified.

The words ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ imply that these are the things they were directed to adopt as part of Abraham's religion. However, the Quraysh have abandoned them and by regarding some lawful animals to be unlawful, they claim to be followers of this religion. The Prophet (sws) is narrating to them these directives of Abraham's religion to make them think how far they have deviated from it, in spite of claiming to be its adherents. In order to appreciate the real stress in لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (so that you understand), readers may keep in mind the opening verse: "say: come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you." The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) has related these details so that the Quraysh revisit their attitude and try to understand the reality.

Consider next the words: "And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him." The rights of the orphans have been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā'. The wealth of the orphans is like fire of Hell and for this reason none should even go near it with any evil intention. The only proper way to go near their wealth is to manage it and further enhance it. When they reach maturity, their wealth should be returned to them in the presence of witnesses.

Consider next the words: "And weigh with honesty and full measure." This directive too is stated in a positive way. Thus it too must be subsumed under what is stated earlier when the rights of the parents ۙ were explained. In verses 1-3 of Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn, it is said:الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا اكْتَالُوْا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُوْنَ وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِيْنَ وَ اِذَا كَالُوْهُمْ اَوْ وَّزَنُوْهُمْ يُخْسِرُوْنَ (Woe be to those who weigh and measure less! Who exact full measure when they take from others, and when they measure or weigh for others give less than what is due).

It may be kept in mind that the system of this universe is based on justice and fairness, as pointed out in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. Moreover, every object bears witness that its creator adheres to justice. For this reason, for the well being of this universe, it is essential that human beings in their spheres too stick to justice. Any deviation from it will lead them away from their centre of gravitation and will create tremendous disorder in the whole system. In verse 35 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it is stated: وَاَوۡفُوا الۡكَيۡلَ اِذَا كِلۡتُمۡ وَزِنُوۡا بِالۡقِسۡطَاسِ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيۡرٌ وَّاَحۡسَنُ تَاۡوِيۡلًا.[111] The last words of this verse relate to the consequences and blessings of both of this world and the next. These blessings are self-evident regarding the next world. In this world, these blessings manifest themselves in the form of a just economic system in which trade and business ventures are established on right footings. Nations which are dishonest in their dealings have never developed in this world nor is their any chance for them to do so. This vice is not just one vice; it is the source of many other vices. A nation fraught with this evil is devoid of the concept of justice and fairness. For this reason, it is not only devoid of the ability to create a healthy society, it also sows seeds of disorder in God's earth. Thus in accordance with God's established practice, such a nation is destroyed. More details on this are found in the next *sūrah* when the nation of Shū'ayb (sws) is discussed.

Consider next the words "We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear." Evident from this is that all directives which God has given to human beings are in accordance with their capacities. Nothing among them are beyond their capacity and capability. Secondly, everyone must follow these directives with full honesty and veracity both in letter and in spirit. Any inadvertent mistake in following them will be overlooked by God. By delineating this required standard, the purpose is also to circumvent any extremism in exercising caution. No one should set goals that are beyond those set by God. However, these words should not cause any misconception in people that they themselves can ascertain the extent of their strength and capacity and then select to what extent they can follow God's directives. God has not given anyone this discretion.

The words "and when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives" state a general principle.[112] However, occasion and context shows that here they imply that no evidence borne and no decision given by people should be against the truth even if the matter relates to their relatives.

At the end, a comprehensive directive is given: "And fulfil God's promise." This includes promises which God has taken from people as well as those which they make with one another for any noble cause. A person will be held answerable to God for every promise he makes. So every promise, if it is within the limits stipulated by God, is a promise made with Him. Thus the words used in verse 34 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl are: وَاَوۡفُوۡا بِالۡعَهۡدِ ۚ اِنَّ الۡعَهۡدَ كَانَ مَسۡـُٔوۡلًا.[113]

The words ذٰلِكُمۡ وَصّٰكُمۡ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ should be understood in the light of what is explained earlier under ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ. However, what needs deliberation is that earlier the word used was تَعْقِلُوْنَ. Here it is تَذَكَّرُوْنَ and in the next one, in the same context, it is said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ. There is a very deep meaningful relationship between تَعَقُّل, تَذَكُّر and تَقْوٰى. When a person frees himself from blind following and resolves to seriously reflect on something, then this is تَعَقُّل. Through this تَعَقُّل facts found in human nature are revealed to him but are veiled because of a person's indifference. Revealing of these facts is تَذَكُّر. This تَذَكُّر guides a person to the destination of تَقْوٰى which epitomizes education and self-purification as well as religion and *sharī‘ah*. At some appropriate instance ahead, I will explain that the *sharī‘ah* is based on human nature. For this reason, as far as the basics and fundamentals of religion are concerned, they do not come from an external source; they are divulged from human nature on the condition that a person after being reminded by God does تَذَكُّر. The *sharī‘ah* is a treasury that has been extracted from our nature and has been consigned to us, on the condition that we give due regard to it.

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[111] And when you measure give full measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned.

[112] Thus in verse 36 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, the words are: "and do not go after what you know not because ears, eyes and heart – each of them shall be questioned."

[113] And keep your promises because you shall be held accountable for promises.

The last verse read: وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِيْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ. The word مُسْتَقِيْمًا is an accusative of state. The verb found in the demonstrative noun is acting on it. The verse implies that the straight path which the Prophet (sws) is presenting before them should be followed by them; it is instructed by God and taught by Abraham (sws) to his progeny. They should retract from all other paths because they will lead them astray from this path and from Abraham's religion. It was through Abraham (sws) that they had been directed to follow this path and now it is through Muḥammad (sws) that they are once again being reminded of it so that they can avoid destruction and divine punishment.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that just as the natural criterion between what is lawful and unlawful in edibles is what is pure and wholesome and what is not, in a similar way, the basic principle in rights and obligations and character and conduct is that all things that are enjoined stem from justice, goodness and good conventions and all things that are forbidden stem from rebelliousness, lewdness and vice. The foundations of what is forbidden and what is not in the religion of Abraham (sws) and in the religion of Islam are based on this principle. More details on this are found under verse 90 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

ثُمَّ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِيْٓ اَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۴﴾[114]

The word ثُمَّ signifies sequence. Earlier the religion of Abraham (sws) was under discussion. After this, it was Moses (sws) who was given a book and a *sharī‘ah*. It may be kept in mind here that the basic contents of this book and Abraham's religion are the same. The first directives given to Moses (sws) written on tablets are famously known as the "Ten Commandments." They may be couched in different words but the essence is the same as what was directed to Abraham (sws). Even the number of commandments is common. If there is any addition in the Mosaic *sharī'ah*, it is only of the nature of additional details, as indicated by the Qur'ān. Moreover, precisely the same directives were given to this *ummah*, as shall become evident from the exegesis of Sūrah al-Naḥl and Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. In other words, actual religion is one. Difference lies only in details and completion. In this final *sharī'ah*, by reverting religion to its real foundation, it has been perfected and relieved of all the restrictions which had been imposed on the Jews because of their rebelliousness, as has been explained earlier.

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[114] Then We then gave Moses the Book to complete My favour on him who was thorough, as an explanation of everything, and as guidance and mercy so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord.

Some people are of the view that the words تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِىْٓ اَحْسَنَ refer to a group. However, in my opinion, they refer to Moses (sws). The demonstrative pronoun الَّذِىْٓ is conventionally used for proper nouns and when it occurs in the singular, it can only allude to a person. In Qur'ānic parables, it does refer at times to a group but this is only the case in certain contexts and backgrounds. This attribute for Moses (sws) is used here exactly as it is used in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Najm for Abraham as الَّذِىْٓ وَفّٰى (who was loyal). The purpose of referring to Moses (sws) with this attribute is to show why he was rewarded with this favour. He was thorough in his deeds. He understood his obligation to the favours God bestowed on him intrinsically and extrinsically and befittingly discharged it. It is such people who become worthy of God's favours and are selected by Him for such a position as messengerhood. God perfects His favour on them. This attribute is also very subtly reminding the Jews to reflect on the person from whom they acquired religion. He was blessed with this favour because he recognized his duty to this favour and efficiently carried it out. On the other hand, the Jews disregarded every favour with contempt and evaded every directive and even distorted it; yet they claim that all the success of this world and the next belong to them.

The words "as an explanation of everything" refer to all things of religion. The foundational principles of religion are the same as the ones explained under Abraham's religion earlier. However, each of them has sub-components and corollaries. In the book given to Moses (sws), God mentioned all these details and constituents. In this way, this book became a source of guidance and mercy.

The words "guidance" and "mercy" in a very apt sequence express the purpose for which God reveals His scriptures. They are revealed so that they guide people to the way according to which they should lead their lives in this world which will then earn them His mercy in the next world. In this way, God's Book is guidance with regard to its objective and mercy with regard to its consequences. Moreover, the real purpose of this life is success in afterlife. The life of this world is temporary and transient. For this reason, the purpose of divine books is to induce people to profess faith in meeting God and lead a life while keeping this mission in mind. Thus the words: "so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord."

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۵﴾ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۠
وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۶﴾ اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْا لَوْ اَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا ۗ سَنَجْزِى الَّذِيْنَ يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ
الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾[115]

After the Torah, now the revelation of the Qur’ān is mentioned. It is a means of blessings for all people in general and for the Arabs in particular. After stating this, the Arabs are warned that the truth has been conclusively conveyed to them through this book and now they have no excuse left before God. So if they must persist in this denial, they must contemplate its consequences.

The word مُبٰرَكٌ has been used in the Qur’ān at many places for rain which becomes a source of irrigation to bring forth greenery and vegetation. It is this rain which energizes the treasure of seeds sown in it so that they can become lush green plants and it gives it lush foliage after they have become dry and desolate. In this word is also concealed the metaphorical meaning that this Qur’ān too has been revealed to bestow mankind with new life after its spiritual death and revive religious guidance after it has been adulterated with alien concepts.

Consider next the verse: اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۠ وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ. Before them a governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed as per linguistic principles. The actual construction is to the effect: كَرَاهَةَ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا. An example of this style can be seen in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah.

The words بَيِّنَةٌ, هُدًى and رَحْمَةٌ used in verse 157 for the Qur’ān. The first of these means “a convincing and conclusive argument.” This word is used in the Qur’ān with regard to two aspects. First, it ended all the excuses referred to earlier which the Arabs had. Second, the Qur’ān in itself is a conclusive proof and argument. It does not need any external evidence to certify its divine origins. It is a challenge for which the Arabs had no answer, as has been referred to at many instances within it. Moreover, like the Torah, it is not merely a collection of directives; it has been revealed with all the reasoning needed to verify its claims. So strong, logical and natural is this reasoning that people can stubbornly react to it but they cannot deny it.

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[115] And this blessed Book that We have revealed, follow it and fear [God] so that you are shown mercy. Lest you say: “The Book was revealed to only the two earlier communities and we had no knowledge of its reading and teaching.” Or say: “Had the Book been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than them.” Thus a conclusive argument and a guidance and mercy have come to you from your Lord. So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion.

Consider next the words: فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ صَدَفَ عَنْهَا ؕ سَنَجْزِى الَّذِيْنَ يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْدِفُوْنَ. The verb صدف is both transitive and intransitive and means "to evade something" and also "to make someone evade something." Those who think that it is used transitively here seem correct. Before it, it has been stated "the ones who reject the revelations of God." This already carries the meaning of "evasion." After that, it is only appropriate that the verb be used transitively. Thus the overall meaning would be: those who denied God's revelations and stopped others from them.

The words imply that who can be more wretched and deprived than those to whom a book comes and does away with all their excuses, is a conclusive and convincing proof as well a lighthouse of guidance and can secure God's mercy for them in the hereafter but they deny it and stop others as well from accepting it.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ رَبُّكَ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِىْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ اَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِىْٓ اِيْمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ؕ قُلِ انْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ (١٥٨)[116]

The verse implies that all their excuses were done away with and the truth was conveyed to them from every angle but they are not ones who can be convinced through reasoning and proofs and only await the appearance of angels or God before them, and if this is not possible then some sign of punishment be shown to them. In verses 210 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and 111 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, these demands have been alluded to and are mentioned as well in some *sūrahs* coming up. For example, in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Naḥl, it is said: هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِىَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ.[117] Similarly, in verse 21 of Sūrah al-Furqān, the words used are: وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ نَرٰى رَبَّنَا ؕ لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِىْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيْرًا.[118]

The verse under discussion goes on to say that expressing faith after observing the promised doom will be of no avail to them, what to speak of the appearance of angels. Only that faith is acceptable which is professed through the faculties of sight, hearing, heart, mind and intellect. If these people await a sign of their doom, they should continue to wait and so will God because all those signs which make a nation of worthy of punishment have manifested themselves in them. According to God's established practice what only remains is that He decide their fate by destroying falsehood and be making the truth dominant. Here it should be kept in mind that when a messenger and his companions have done what is required of them and the stubborn and rebellious still do not pay heed, then they too have to wait for God's verdict because the supremacy of the truth is related to the manifestation of this verdict. The desire of destruction for opponents is not the real purpose of this waiting; it is the sentiment of the supremacy of the truth that is the real objective of this wait. The mission of the prophets of God is to spiritually purify and rectify the lives of people. They expend all their energy in this mission. Those who have the slightest element of good in them accept this reformation from them. Those who become blind and deaf to these calls are actually dead. If their corpses remain on the land, they will stagnate and spread disorder. Hence in their destruction lies the well-being of people. This issue will *inshaAllāh* be taken up in greater detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūḥ.

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[116] So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion. They are only waiting for the angels or your Lord to come to them or a special sign from among the signs of your Lord appear to them. The day such a sign of your Lord manifests itself, the faith of a person will not be of any benefit to him who did not accept it earlier or did not earn pious deeds from his faith. Say: Wait; we too are waiting.

[117] They only await that angels come to them or the directive of your Lord arrives.

[118] And those who do not fear coming before Us, say: "Why were angels not sent down to us, or We could have directly observed God?" They regarded themselves to be very superior in their hearts and showed great arrogance. The day they will see the angels, there shall be no good news for these wrongdoers and they will cry out: "Refuge! Refuge!"

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَ كَانُوْا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَمْرُهُمْ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ
جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ عَشْرُ اَمْثَالِهَا ۚ وَ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزٰۤى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَ هُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ قُلْ اِنَّنِيْ هَدٰىنِيْ رَبِّيْۤ
اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۚ۬ دِيْنًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَ مَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِيْ وَ نُسُكِيْ وَ مَحْيَايَ وَ
مَمَاتِيْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ ۙ لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ ۚ وَ بِذٰلِكَ اُمِرْتُ وَ اَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِيْ رَبًّا وَّ هُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ ؕ وَ لَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ اِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَ لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ
تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾[119]

Earlier in verse 153, it was said: "And that: 'Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord.' These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain secure from His punishment.” While explaining it, I had written that this is a mention of the real religion of Abraham (sws) that was given to both branches of his progeny: the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. However, both branches created religious innovations and side-tracks in it: the latter adopted polytheism and the former named themselves as followers of Judaism and Christianity. The real path was lost. So, the Almighty once again had it recovered through the last Prophet – Muḥammad (sws). Arguments in favour of this were presented in detail, as is evident from previous discussions. However, all these afore-mentioned groups opposed this manifest reality and became adamant on their own deviant paths.

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[119] You have no link with those who created divisions in their religion and split themselves into sects. Their matter rests with God alone. So, He alone will gather them; then tell them what they had been doing. He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them. Say: My Lord has guided me to a straight path – the upright faith which is the path of Abraham's religion, who was fully devoted and was not among the idolaters. Say: My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the Universe. He has no associate and thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit. Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything? And each soul gets what it earns and no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return. Thus, He will tell you in what you have been differing.

In the verses under discussion, the last prophet is directed to have no link with people who have created divisions in the religion given by God; he has already discharged his obligation and should now leave them alone; their matter rests with God and it is now He who will inform them of their misdeeds. This also indicates that the time for the Prophet’s (sws) declaration of acquittal was drawing very near.

Consider next, the words: “He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them.” They actually explain what is said right before them: “then tell them what they had been doing.” Here informing them of their deeds obviously entails its consequence: reward and punishment. It is thus said that neither anything will fall short for those who did good deeds nor any excess will be committed by those who did evil. Here it may be kept in mind that the words “in proportion to it” refer to their proportion and extent before God and not to what human beings regard in this world. Moreover, the reward of virtue that has been stated here is the minimum. It does not negate the blessings in excess to it mentioned at other instances.

In قُلۡ اِنَّنِیۡ هَدٰىنِیۡ رَبِّیۡۤ اِلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ ۚ۬ دِیۡنًا قِیَمًا مِّلَّةَ اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ حَنِیۡفًا, the words دِیۡنًا قِیَمًا form a permutative (*badal*) from صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ as per it is occasion and context. The words قَیِّمٌ and قِیَمٌ are synonymous ie. the straight and natural religion that has no deviation. In the Qur’ān, this word has been used for the religion of Abraham (sws) and the religion of Islam and the purpose is to show that its nature is purged from the deviances that the Idolaters, the Jews and the Christians had created in their religion.

This in fact is that same statement that was uttered earlier from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in positive words. It implies that he has no link with the innovations created by the Jews and the Christians and that he should clearly declare before them that he has been blessed with the guidance of the straight path which is the religion of Abraham (sws) who was devoted to his Lord and was not among the Idolaters. It is as if the discussion that began from the beginning of the *sūrah* has reached its culmination. At the end, it is declared through the tongue of Muḥammad (sws) that the real religion of Abraham (sws) is the one he is following; he who wants to follow it should do so; all other paths are deviations and he has not link with them and he disowns them.

Consider next the words: قُلۡ اِنَّ صَلَاتِیۡ وَ نُسُکِیۡ وَ مَحۡیَایَ وَ مَمَاتِیۡ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ. Here the word نُسُك

means “animal sacrifice” and this meaning is signified by its placement adjacent to the prayer. In verse 2 of Sūrah al-Kawthar, it is said: فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ.[120]

In the part under discussion, the real spirit and essence of the religion of Abraham (sws) has been explained through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). Deliberation shows that there is a very profound comparison between the prayer and animal sacrifice and between life and death. The prayer is compared with life and animal sacrifice is compared with death. This is an indication that those who follow this religion live for God and die for Him as well. There are no divisions in their lives. From the beginning to the end, they are in harmony. There is no associate of God: لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهٗ. For this reason, there is no associate of God in a person’s life as well. It is meant entirely and totally for God without any division, reservation or exception for the one and only God. It is then stated: “Thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit.” This means that this submission is human nature and the Prophet (sws) has been commanded by God to obey it. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) is treading this path and all those who have the strength should follow him; he will not postpone this journey while waiting for others.

Consider next, the question: “Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything?” This is actually the reasoning why the Prophet (sws) is submitting to God: when God is the Lord of everything, how can he associate partners with Him.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ط اِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ صلے وَاِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾[121]

This is the final warning sounded to the Quraysh. They are not the first nation to appear on the stage of this world. Many nations appeared before them and then finally they were given this opportunity by God. This bestowal of authority itself shows that God will assess them on the basis of the same criterion He assessed the nations before them. If they do not qualify, He will discard them the way He discarded others. Here this is stated in a concise way. Its full details are coming up in the next *sūrah*: al-A‘rāf.

The words “and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you” are meant to dispel a misconception foolish people are often afflicted with. When they think that they are successful in this world and have more worldly wealth and resources than those who are warning them of the Hereafter, they surmise that these people are silly for had they been wrong, why would they have

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[120] So pray only for your Almighty.

[121] And it is He who has made you successors of one another in the earth and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you. Indeed, very swift is your Lord in retribution also and is also Forgiving and Merciful.

succeeded in life? In this way they become even more audacious on their rebelliousness. These people are told not to ruin themselves through this misconceived notion. Whatever they have is not because of their abilities; it is a test from God to see whether they express gratitude or not. The day of reward and punishment for virtues and vices is about to come and they should not think that it is far off. Rather it is very near. On that day, everyone will see the consequences of his good and bad deeds. Those who would have shown ingratitude to God will suffer and those who fulfilled their obligation towards His favours will be forgiven by God and show mercy.

The exegesis of this *sūrah* ends here. وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
11 Ṣafr, 1388 AH
10 May, 1968 AD

Sūrah al-A‘rāf

Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In Sūrah al-An‘ām, as is evident from its commentary, the Quraysh were invited to Islam. The basis of this call was that it is Islam which is the religion of Abraham (sws). He had directed his progeny to follow it. The current innovations and superstitions that the Quraysh adhere to has nothing to do with it. God has done a great favour to them by sending a messenger from among themselves. He has conclusively delivered His religion to them. If even after this they persist in their denial, they should remember that He destroys those deny His messengers. This is a known fact of history to find which they do not have to go anywhere. The history of the land which they reign today in has enough lessons to learn from. They are not the first inhabitants of this land. Several nations have ruled here before them. In fact, some of them were far mightier than them in their power and majesty. They are their heirs. So, there is no reason why they should be treated differently. They are guilty of the same -crimes because of which the Almighty had destroyed the previous nations and given the Quraysh the political authority. So why would God let them make hey? His law is the same for every one.

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-An‘ām, the previous *sūrah*. The element of warning pervades it as opposed to element of preaching in the previous *sūrah*. The Quraysh are clearly warned in it that if they do not mend their ways, they will be seized by God’s torment. A charge sheet against them is first briefly presented. After that a detailed history of all the previous nations is narrated who reigned in this land and reached their fate one after the other. They were guilty of the same crimes as the Quraysh. These details are actually the detailed explanation of the last verse of Sūrah al-An‘ām. With the Quraysh, the Jews are also sounded a final admonition. At the end, a warning is given with reference to the covenant based on human nature that was taken from every human soul before its birth. This takes the *sūrah* to its culmination. After this, the phases of migration and declaration of was or visitation of divine punishment ensue.

We now present an analysis of the meanings of the *sūrah* so that the whole of it can be viewed at a glance.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-9): The Prophet (sws) is assured about his responsibility regarding this Book of God: he should warn people through it so that the truth is conveyed in its ultimate form. He is not responsible to make the accept faith. Only the believers will benefit from this Book. The Quraysh are warned to profess faith in this Book, otherwise they should remember that many nations before them were destroyed for the crime of denying God’s messengers. When God’s torment visited them, they could do nothing to stop it. In fact, they themselves confessed their crime and were wiped off the face of the earth. They should be aware that a day will necessarily come when they will be held accountable for their responsibilities and the messenger for his. On that day, God will expose all their deeds before them. The scale of justice that will be set up on that day will weigh every deed and decide how much truth or falsehood it carries. On that day, only they will succeed whose scales are heavy. All the rest will be doomed.

Verses (10-25): The Quraysh are warned that the political authority they enjoy in this land was blessed to them by God. He opened the way to sustenance and livelihood for them. However, Satan prevailed over them and made them ungrateful. The incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is then narrated. It becomes evident from it that Satan had threatened Adam’s progeny that he would lead them astray and their majority will turn out to be disobedient and ungrateful to God. In the case of the Quraysh, he has succeeded in his mission. Just as he had led astray Adam (sws) and Eve and had had them expelled from Paradise, he is trying to lead them astray too. They should not let him succeed in his aim.

Verses (26-30): The Quraysh are reminded that in spite of being the progeny of Adam (sws), they did not remember the enmity of Satan with their progenitors. He had led them astray, deprived them of the attire of Paradise and had had them expelled from it. He has played the same trick with the Quraysh. By obeying Satan, they have disrobed themselves of both the inner and outer attire with which God had embellished them. The attire of piety which is the embellishment of one’s inner self was taken off by them and so was the outer attire. Thus they were lured by Satan right in the House of God to encircle it while being naked. They regard this indecency not only to be a heritage of their forefathers but also a directive of God. Can the Almighty direct people to such an act of indecency? He only commands His creatures to adhere to truth and justice, to worship Him alone and not associate partners with Him. While obeying Satan, the Quraysh have violated all these directives and still claim that this alone is the path of truth. Very few people could secure themselves from Satan’s luring.

Verses (31-34): The Quraysh are warned that there is no basis of what they regard to be lawful and unlawful out of their own whims. God has neither prohibited adornments nor edibles. These things are permissible in this world for the believers and in the Hereafter they will be their sole recipients. What he has prohibited is vulgarity, whether open or hidden, usurping rights and rebelliousness – none of these have any justification. Similarly, he has forbidden polytheism for it has no grounds and imputing falsehood to Him. However, the Quraysh are guilty of doing all these forbidden practices. If, in spite of this, they are being respite, it is because a time has been prescribed by God for every destruction.

Verses (35-43): It is reminded that since the very beginning the progeny of Adam (sws) was directed to obey God's Messengers that would be sent to inform them of His commands. Those who will follow them will go to Paradise and those who will deny them will go to Hell. All the inhabitants of Hell will curse one another and none will be able to come out from it. The fire of Hell will be something they will continue to burn in. However, the believers will enter Paradise. They will be happy to meet one another and will be grateful to God's favours. They will confess that whatever they have been blessed with is because they had followed the messengers. Whatever the messengers had told them came true word for word.

Verses (44-53): The inhabitants of Paradise will inform the inhabitants of Hell that the promises God made with them were fulfilled. They will ask them if they too have seen what they were promised. A declaration of curse will be delivered to the companions of Hell from God. It is then mentioned that people stationed in certain turrets will be made to view both Paradise and Hell. The purpose would be to make them see that the promises made by God through His messengers were all fulfilled. The people standing in these turrets will congratulate the inhabitants of Paradise and rebuke the inhabitants of Hell. The latter will plead to the former to show some mercy to them. They will receive the reply that the favours of Paradise are forbidden to the disbelievers. A declaration from God is then stated that people who ignored His directives in the previous world will now be ignored by Him. The disbelievers will express yearning at their misfortune and deprivations.

Verses (54-58): The disbelievers of the Quraysh are warned that it is solely God Who creates and runs this universe. In both hope and despair, they must plead before Him. They must not spread disorder in it after it has been reformed. The Day of Judgement is certain to come. They are continuously witnessing the emergence of life after death in this universe. God has explained His signs in every way.

Verses (59-93): The anecdotes of the nations of Noah (sws), Hūd (sws), Ṣāliḥ (sws), Lot (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws) are narrated. They show that God wipes out those nations from the face of the earth who spread disorder in it and deny the call of their messengers.

Verses (94-102): A brief comment is made on the afore-mentioned anecdotes. Some basic principles and lessons that must be learnt from how God deals with various nations are referred to. Its underlying wisdom is also alluded to. The Quraysh are warned that they are the successors of these nations and if they had used their insight to study the fates of these nations, they would have learnt many lessons. However, just as God had put a seal on the hearts of these nations, their hearts too have been sealed.

Verses (103-136): The anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is mentioned. It becomes evident from it that the Pharaoh employed all possible tricks and ploys against Moses (sws) but God did not let him succeed. The wrongdoers were destroyed and the oppressed faction was given political authority in the land because of its perseverance.

Verses (137-171): A comprehensive comment is made on all the phases of the history of the Israelites. It is evident from this that the Almighty was always kind to them but they showed ingratitude to His favours right from the beginning to that time. They did not benefit from any reminder or warning and this attitude is still continuing. Thus they are opposing the very truth whose protection they were made responsible of. The fact is that this is the last chance for them. If they do not avail it, they will suffer eternal humiliation.

Verses (172-206): In this concluding section, the Quraysh are reminded of the covenant drawn from human nature and are asked to learn a lesson from the fate of the Israelites. After that they are threatened with God's punishment and warned that when they would be seized by God, these idols that they have carved out will not be any benefit to them. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is directed to show patience and ignore his adversaries. He is asked to keep God in remembrance all the time.

Section I: Verses (1-9)

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓصٓ ﴿١﴾ كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِيْ صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَ ذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ اِتَّبِعُوْا مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ
اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا فَجَآءَهَا بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا
اَوْ هُمْ قَآئِلُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ فَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَ
لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ۙ فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِۨالْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Alif Lām Mīm Ṣu‘ād. It is this Book which has been revealed to you. So let not there be any worry in your heart because of it. It has been revealed so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers. People! Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other patrons leaving aside your Lord. Very seldom do you receive a reminder. And how many cities have We destroyed; so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon. Then when Our scourge visited them, they could only say: "Indeed, it was we who were unjust. " So, bear in mind that We shall ask those to whom messengers were sent and ask from the messengers themselves as well. Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them. The truth only shall hold weight on that day. Then those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who are the ones who put themselves in loss because they would deny Our revelations and would be unjust to their souls. (1-9)

Explanation

الٓمّٓصٓ ﴿١﴾ كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِيْ صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾[1]

Detailed discussion on the abbreviated letters can be seen at the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the letters الٓمّٓ were discussed. Here ص is added to them. It has been mentioned earlier that *sūrahs* that have similar names have similar topics. Thus deliberation shows that there are many aspects in which this *sūrah* is similar to Sūrah al-Baqarah even though this is a Makkan and the latter a Madīnan *sūrah* and the addressees of both are different from one another too.

Here the verses can be parsed in two possible ways: Firstly, الٓمّٓصٓ can be regarded as an independent sentence whose inchoative (*mubtadā’*) has been suppressed. The second option is to regard الٓمّٓصٓ as the inchoative that is connected to كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ in the next verse that forms the enunciative (*khabar*). I have preferred the first option and regard كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ to also have a suppressed inchoative as well. Nevertheless, there is not much difference in the meaning in both options.

The word حَرَجٌ means “worry” and anxiety.” This verse was revealed to assure the Prophet (sws) in a phase in which the enmity of the Quraysh was at its peak, as is evident from the analysis of meanings done earlier. They were using all kinds of wicked tricks to persecute the believers. In order to harass the Prophet (sws), they would make new demands from him everyday. On the one hand was this intensity of opposition and on the other hand such was his conscientious nature that in spite of doing all what he could to invite the Quraysh to Islam, he would be extremely worried that perhaps he was falling short in some way in his preaching endeavours because of which they were not being convinced of such an evident truth. Both these things were weighing down heavily on the heart of the Prophet (sws). The Qur’ān has reduced both these burdens. It has urged the Prophet (sws) to disregard the opposition of the Quraysh because this Book was not authored by him nor did he every ask God to reveal it to him. In fact, it has been revealed to him by God without his demand or desire. So why should he be worried by the opposition of its adversaries. The God Who has revealed it will provide help and support in this matter. He is not weak or powerless nor is He unaware or unconcerned of the prevailing circumstances. He fully knows the responsibility He has imposed on in the Prophet (sws), the needs of the provisions of this responsibility and how much strength is needed by the Prophet (sws) to remove the hurdles of this path. God will provide all these things to him. Hence, he should not worry and rest assured.

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[1] This is Alif Lām Mīm Ṣu‘ād. It is this Book which has been revealed to you. So let not there be any worry in your heart because of it. It has been revealed so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers.

The words “so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers” depict the extent of responsibility of the Prophet (sws). Whether the Quraysh accept it or not is not the worry of the Prophet (sws). His responsibility is to only warn them and deliver the message to them.

Consider the clause: لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَ ذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. Here the expression وَ ذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ is co-ordinated in meaning to لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ but it is in the form of a noun instead of a verb. The purpose of expressing it in the form of a noun is to refer to a fact: as far as warning is concerned, the Prophet (sws) should discharge this responsibility towards the disbelievers; however, only the believers will benefit from this reminder. This topic has been mentioned at a number of instances in the Qur’ān. For example, in Sūrah Ṭāhā, it is said: طٰهٰ ۚ مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لِتَشْقٰٓى ۙ اِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَنْ يَّخْشٰى ۙ تَنْزِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ وَالسَّمٰوٰتِ الْعُلٰى (This is Sūrah Ṭāhā. We have not revealed this Qur’ān to you to put you through difficulty. It is only a reminder for those who fear God. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. (20:1-4))

اِتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ [2]

Interpreters have generally regarded the believers to be the addressees of this verse. However, both its context and words evidence that the disbelievers of the Quraysh are its addressees. After assuring the Prophet (sws) in the previous verse, the Quraysh are warned here. The last part of the verse “very seldom do you receive a reminder” is an expression of sorrow on such people.

وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا فَجَآءَهَا بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا اَوْ هُمْ قَآئِلُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ [3]

The word قَرْيَة occurs both for a city as well as for its inhabitants. For this reason, while using pronouns and verbs for it, sometimes the word is referred to and sometimes its meaning. This style is common in every language.

The word قَآئِلُوْنَ is from قيلولة and refers to celebrating the afternoon; sleeping is not its essential component. Since Arabia was a hot-weather country, people were compelled to rest in the afternoon in their houses, tents, orchards and other abodes.

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[2] People! Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other patrons leaving aside your Lord. Very seldom do you receive a reminder.

[3] And how many cities have We destroyed; so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon. Then when Our scourge visited them, they could only say: “Indeed, it was we who were unjust. ”

Some commentators while considering the words "so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon" opine that God's punishment comes in the afternoon or night when people are sleeping. However, this view is not only against history but also the Qur'ān too. Thus, for example, it is stated in verse 47 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (Ask: Have you ever thought that if God's punishment visits you unannounced or announced, would any perish but the unjust ?) Similarly, in verses 97-98 of the current *sūrah*, it is stated:

اَفَاَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَّ هُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ. اَوَ اَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا ضُحًى وَّ هُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ.

> So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing?

In my opinion, the words under discussion do not imply that God's punishment comes at a time when people are sleeping. On the contrary, it means that this punishment can come silently in the dark of night and also as a clamour right in broad sunshine. Whenever its time comes, none is able to stop it nor save people from its impact. Only they remain secure whom the Almighty keeps secure.

This is the warning to which the words "so that you can warn people through it" of verse 2 point to. The Quraysh are threatened that the Almighty destroyed many nations through His scourge whenever He wanted. None could survive. In fact, every nation consigned itself to God's punishment while confessing its crime. The implication is that if the Quraysh do not follow what is revealed to them, they too will meet the same fate as that of the previous nations. Today they show conceit, but at that time they will be left with no power or strength and will confess their crime from their tongues. However, this confession will be of no use then.

فَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَ لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّ مَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَ الْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾[4]

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4. So, bear in mind that We shall ask those to whom messengers were sent and ask from the messengers themselves as well. Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them. The truth only shall hold weight on that day. Then

God’s Messengers warn people of two things: firstly, the punishment that necessarily visits a nation that denies its messenger; secondly, to the reward and punishment that everyone will necessarily face in the hereafter. In the previous verse, the Quraysh have been warned of the first of these and in the verses under discussion, they are warned of the second of these things.

The accountability of nations has been mentioned in the Qur’ān thus:

كُلَّمَآ اُلْقِيَ فِيْهَا فَوْجٌ سَاَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَآ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ قَالُوْا بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيْرٌ ۙ۵ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَ قُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚۖ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيْرٍ وَقَالُوْا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ اَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِيْٓ اَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ فَاعْتَرَفُوْا بِذَنْۢبِهِمْ ۚ فَسُحْقًا لِّاَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ. (٦٧:٨- ١١)

Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: “Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?” They will say: “A warner did come but we rejected him and said: ‘God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.’” And they will say: “If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell.” And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell. (67:8-11)

The accountability of the messengers is mentioned thus in the Qur’ān:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ (٥:١٠٩)

The Day when God will gather all the messengers; then will ask them: “What response was given to you?” (5:109)

The words “Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them” imply that everything will be thoroughly brought to light: how these messengers delivered the truth with full earnestness and how their addressees deliberately denied them. It may be noted that this narration would be meant to leave them with no excuse. No possibility will be left for anyone to open their mouths.

The scale of the Almighty on the Day of Judgement will only be tilted by the truth. Evil will have no weight in it. Those who scales will tilt will succeed and others will be doomed. Regarding the weight of deeds, the Qur’ān has also mentioned another principle:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْاَخْسَرِيْنَ اَعْمَالًا اَلَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ صُنْعًا

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those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who are the ones who put themselves in loss because they would deny Our revelations and would be unjust to their souls.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَآئِهٖ فَحَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا
كَفَرُوْا وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَرُسُلِيْ هُزُوًا (١٨: ١٠٣–١٠٥)

> Say: Should We inform you who the greatest losers are with regard to their deeds? Those people all of whose efforts were wasted while going after the life of the world while they thought that they were doing very noble deeds. It is these people who denied their Lord’s revelations as well as meeting Him. Thus their deeds went waste and on the Day of Judgment, We shall not give them any weight. (18:103-105)

It is evident from these verses that only those deeds will have weight on the Day of Judgement which are done to earn God’s pleasure and reward in the hereafter. Deeds which are devoid of these two features will be regarded as evil and carry no weight.

Consider the words are: بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ.There exists a *taḍmīn* (suppression of meaning) because the verb and the preposition do not collocate. If this is revealed, the verse should be to the effect: بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ يَظْلِمُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ (because they continued to deny Our revelations and were unjust to their souls). The advantage of this *taḍmīn* is that a comprehensive meaning can be espoused in a few words.

Section II: Verses (10-25)

First, the Almighty addresses the Quraysh and by reminding them of His favour rebukes them: it was He Who blessed them with majesty and splendour in the land, made them secure from fear and provided means and resources for their livelihood. However, instead of being grateful and obedient to Him, they became ingrates and disobedient.

After that, the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan that was narrated to the Jews in Sūrah al-Baqarah is recounted with some additions before the Quraysh: Satan had sworn to remain an eternal enemy of Adam (sws) and his progeny. He fulfilled this oath by having Adam (sws) and Eve expelled from Paradise. Now he has fulfilled this oath on the Quraysh and they are fully caught in the web of deception weaved by him. The consequences of this are quite evident.

Readers may study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ
قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ ۖ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ

اَمَرْتُكَ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۚ خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ نَّارٍ وَّ خَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَكَ اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ
فِيْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِيْۤ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَاۤ
اَغْوَيْتَنِيْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَ عَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَ عَنْ
شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ وَ لَا تَجِدُ اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ؕ لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
مِنْكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَ يٰۤاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَ زَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَ لَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا
مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وٗرِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْاٰتِهِمَا وَ قَالَ مَا نَهٰىكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ
هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَكُوْنَا مَلَكَيْنِ اَوْ تَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ قَاسَمَهُمَاۤ اِنِّيْ لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلّٰىهُمَا
بِغُرُوْرٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَ طَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ؕ وَ نَادٰىهُمَا رَبُّهُمَاۤ اَلَمْ
اَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَ اَقُلْ لَّكُمَاۤ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَاۤ اَنْفُسَنَا ٚ وَ اِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ
لَنَا وَ تَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَ لَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ مَتَاعٌ اِلٰى
حِيْنٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيْهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَ فِيْهَا تَمُوْتُوْنَ وَ مِنْهَا تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And We granted you authority in this land and opened up for you sources of livelihood, yet seldom are you grateful. (10)

And We designed you. Then gave you form. We then said to the angels: “Prostrate before Adam. ” Except Satan all prostrated. He was not among those who prostrated. God said: “What stopped you from prostrating when I had ordered you?” He replied: “I am better than him. You have created me from fire and created him from clay.” He said: “Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful.” He replied: “Give me respite until the Day people are raised up.” God said: “You have this respite.” He replied: “Since you have led me astray, I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them. Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left. And You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You.” God said: “Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.” (11-18)

And O Adam! Dwell with your wife in the garden and eat in it from wherever you want. But both of you do not go near this tree otherwise you both will become unjust to your own selves. Thus Satan whispered to them to open to them what had been hidden to them from their private parts. He said to them: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” And he swore to them repeatedly and said: “I am from among your well-wishers.” By deceiving them in this way, he enticed both of them. Thus when they tasted the fruit of the tree, their private parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden. And their Lord called them: "Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?" Both cried out: "Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers." He said: "Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there." He said: "You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it." (19-25)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِیْهَا مَعَایِشَ ؕ قَلِیْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾[5]

The expression تمکین فی الارض means "to grant political authority in the land." Thus for example, it is used in this sense in verse 21 of Sūrah Yūsuf: وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِیُوْسُفَ فِی الْاَرْضِ.[6]

The word "land" is mentioned in the general sense but since the addressees here are the Quraysh, it refers to the area of Ḥaram in which they held political sway.

The expression "sources of livelihood" refer to the means of sustenance and blessings available to the Arabs in general and the Quraysh in particular. These blessings are mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of instances. I have referred to them in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In verse 57 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is stated: اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا یُّجْبٰۤی اِلَیْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا.[7]

The words "yet seldom are you grateful" depict what actually was meant to be stated after the things mentioned prior to them.

In other words, it was because of the invocations of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and the House of God that the Quraysh were blessed with political authority and generous provisions of livelihood and sustenance. However, they ended up very ungrateful. Instead of God, they followed Satan, as will be shown ahead. He was successful in whatever trials he wanted to inflict them with.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ ۖ فَسَجَدُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبْلِیْسَ ؕ لَمْ یَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِیْنَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ مَا
مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا خَیْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۚ خَلَقْتَنِیْ مِنْ نَّارٍ وَّ خَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِیْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا یَكُوْنُ لَكَ
اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِیْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِیْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِیْۤ اِلٰی یَوْمِ یُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِیْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَاۤ
اَغْوَیْتَنِیْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِیْمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ۙ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِیَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ بَیْنِ اَیْدِیْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ اَیْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ وَ

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[5] And We granted you authority in this land and opened up for you sources of livelihood, yet seldom are you grateful.

[6] And in this way We granted authority to Joseph in the land.

[7] Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to from Us?

لَا تَجِدُ اَكۡثَرَهُمۡ شٰكِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ قَالَ اخۡرُجۡ مِنۡهَا مَذۡءُوۡمًا مَّدۡحُوۡرًا ؕ لَمَنۡ تَبِعَكَ مِنۡهُمۡ لَاَمۡلَـَٔنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنۡكُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾[8]

The incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is narrated here. It shows the history of the enmity between Adam and his progeny with Satan and his accomplices. The real reason for this enmity also becomes evident from it. It also shows that Satan will be kept alive until the Day of Judgement. It also depicts the promise he has made to take revenge from the progeny of Adam (sws). The purpose of narrating this incident should not elude the readers while they read it.

The reason of Satan's enmity with Adam (sws) and his progeny is because of his jealousy with them which arose when he was asked to honour them. He had rejected this directive with utter arrogance. As a result, he was humiliatingly expelled from Paradise. Ultimately, overcome with anger as a result of this expulsion, he requested God to be given respite until the Day of Judgement. The verses describe how he planned to waylay mankind and lead them away from the path of monotheism.

There are some points in between the lines that are evident from these verses:

Firstly, the real animosity which Satan has with mankind is because of the latter being given preference over him. He asked for respite to prove wrong this preference. Now, it is a matter of great misfortune that human beings start to support him in this conflict created by him against them. This would mean that through their own deeds they bear witness that God had wrongly preferred them over Satan.

Secondly, this world is a place of conflict between Adam's progeny and Satan. At every step, this clash is taking place. Satan has been granted opportunity by God to use all his lures and deceptions against them. This opportunity of whispering evil suggestions to them is with him until the Day of Judgement. After that, it will be decided who won and who lost.

Thirdly, the real target of Satan in his onslaught is to make human beings deviate from the path of monotheism. He will lie in ambush for this purpose and has challenged to lead their majority away from it. They will end up ungrateful to God. Earlier by the words "yet seldom are you grateful," the Quraysh were informed that because of their own failings, they have proven correct Satan's opinion about mankind. Hence they have become worthy of the evil fate God had referred to while replying to the ultimatum of Satan: “I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.”

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[8] And We designed you. Then gave you form. We then said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam. " Except Satan all prostrated. He was not among those who prostrated. God said: "What stopped you from prostrating when I had ordered you?" He replied: "I am better than him. You have created me from fire and created him from clay." He said: "Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful." He replied: "Give me respite until the Day people are raised up." God said: "You have this respite." He replied: "Since you have led me astray, I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them. Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left. And You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You." God said: "Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all."

Once the coherence and sequence of the discourse has become evident, there is absolutely no need to explain the words and components of the verses. Most of these things have already been discussed in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Repeating them here would add to the bulk of the discussion. However, things that were not discussed there, are explained below.

Consider the words: وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ. The word خلق means “to design” something. This word has been used in the Qur’ān alone as well as with its other consequences and linkages. برء ، تسوية، تركيب، ترتيب. Where it is used alone, it refers to all its consequences and linkages. However, when some other linkages are mentioned with it – for example, here صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ is mentioned – it is used in its literal meaning. Here the two words خلق and تصوير refer to the initial and final phases of creation. The initial phase of every creation is its design ad its final phase is the form and perfection given to it.

Here the addressees, as indicated earlier, are the Quraysh. They are being informed of the about the phases of creation of human beings and of the trials ordained for them. Adam (sws) is the father of all humankind. Hence his anecdote is not solely his; it is that of the whole humankind.

The meaning of prostrating before Adam (sws), its underlying wisdom, the reason that jinnkind is included in it and other important related issues have been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah’s *tafsīr*. There it was made evident that Iblīs is the title of the jinn who had deceived Adam (sws). He was from among the jinn and had become rebellious by disobeying God. Those who become his followers among humankind and jinnkind effectively become his progeny. It for such humans and jinn that the Qur’ān uses the word “Satan.” It is not an independent creation, as has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

What is stated here by the words قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ is stated in verse 75 of Sūrah Ṣu‘ād thus: قَالَ يٰٓاِبْلِيْسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ.[9] It is evident that in the first verse there is a لا after مَا مَنَعَكَ, which is not found in the second. The reason for this is that since the meaning of negation is already found in the expression مَا مَنَعَكَ, there is no need to bring the particle of negation لا after it. However, if it is used, it emphasizes the rebuke. Thus the gravity of Satan not prostrating is very evident in the verse under discussion. This style is also found in other languages.

It is evident from the words “when I had ordered you” that Adam (sws) was not worthy of being prostrated before in the absolute sense. It was God Who made him so. Moreover, prostration before him was actually prostration before God because it was done at His behest.

Apparent from the words “I am better than him; You have created me from fire and

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[9] “Satan!” said He, “What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands?”

created him from clay" is that in the eyes of Satan the basis of arrogance was that honour and respect was based on lineage and in this respect he was superior to Adam (sws). The Qur'ān has stated here that the philosophy of regarding one's lineage to be a basis of superiority is an invention of Satan, and wherever it is present, it is his from his heritage. The basis of respect and superiority in the sight of God is obedience to Him and nothing else.

Consider the words: "He said: "Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful." They show that deliberate rebellion from God's directive is arrogance. A person who is inflicted with this arrogance regards himself to be superior to God or equal to Him. Such elevation and exaltedness only behoves God. Those who claim to have a share in it are humiliated by God. An arrogant person has no place in God's Paradise. Paradise is only a place for those who humble themselves before God and worship Him. For precisely this reason, Iblīs was asked to go away from there and because of his arrogance he was given the punishment of eternal humiliation. In verse 40 ahead, it is about such arrogant people that it is said that just as a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle, they cannot enter God's Paradise: اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا عَنۡهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمۡ اَبۡوَابُ السَّمَآءِ وَلَا يَدۡخُلُوۡنَ الۡجَنَّةَ حَتّٰى يَلِجَ الۡجَمَلُ فِىۡ سَمِّ الۡخِيَاطِ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ.[10] Exactly the same words are spoken by Jesus: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," (Luke 18:25). The only difference between the two statements is that the Qur'ān has referred to the actual sin: arrogance and Jesus (sws) has referred to wealth which generally becomes the source of arrogance. It is evident from these details that the real crime of Satan was arrogance. It was because of this that he was expelled from Paradise. For this reason, those who will become his compatriots in this crime will have no place in Paradise.

Since Iblīs was humiliatingly expelled from Paradise, he thought that he will have no opportunity for doing any deed. However, on his request he was granted the opportunity. It was at this juncture that the lives of human beings enter the battle field of trials and tests. Satan spends all his efforts in planning to prove human beings to be unworthy and failed creatures. On the other hand, the success and triumph of human beings hinges on the fact that they prove that they are in fact worthy individuals.

Since this opportunity to do deeds is available to human beings until their death, for this reason Satan too has the chance to lead them astray until their death. Just as after death, the register of deeds of human beings closes, Satan too is left with no chance to lead them astray after that. However, the decision about who won or lost will also be declared on the Day of Judgement. It is for this reason that Satan asked for respite until that Day. Since his request was granted, it means that he was able to delay the decision of the matter of human dignity until that time. It is that time when it will be decided whether human beings are worthy of that sparkling crown or not. If he is worthy of it, he will gain eternal pleasures of Paradise. If this is not so, then with Satan they will dwell in Hell.

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[10] Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers.

After his request was granted, Satan challenged God in the following words: “Since you have led me astray, I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them.” He regarded God be his actual enemy and that is why he challenged him. In other words, as per Satan’s view, the real conflict is not between him and human beings; it is between him and God. The words “since you have led me astray” show that he regarded himself to be on the right path when he refused to prostrate before Adam (sws). He thought that he had gone astray not on his own but because God had led him astray. In other words, God put him through a test in which he could have never succeeded. For this reason, he contended that if had gone astray it was God Who compelled him.

There is a direct connection between God and the nature on which human beings are created. If human nature is not afflicted with unnatural distortions, a person cannot adopt any path but the path of monotheism. For this reason, the Qur’ān and other divine scriptures called monotheism to be صراط مستقيم (the straight path). As long as a person keeps treading this path, he walks towards his destination seven if he walks slowly and tiredly. It may take him long but he will still reach his destination. On the contrary, if a person turns to a crossing that leads to polytheism, he will deviate from his destination and the further he goes the more he goes astray. It is due to this secret that Satan is not able to lead a person astray totally unless he is able to divert him from the wide path of monotheism to the narrow path of polytheism. Thus in his challenge to God, he openly stated that he will sit on the path of monotheism in ambush for mankind and will try to make it lose its way.

Consider the words: “Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left.” They are an expression of the power, extent and comprehensive nature of Satan’s onslaught from his own tongue. He will attack mankind from every direction, every aspect and every place. He will try to get the better of their observations, emotions, feelings, desires and all other ways that he can access them. He will try to poison their thought, ideology and knowledge and everything that he can get hold of. He will try to inject his venom into their research, critiques, writings, literature and art and will try to create disorder in their culture, civilization, society, economic undertakings, fashion, politics and religion.

This very challenge of Satan is cited in verses 62-65 of Sūrah Ḅanī Isrā’īl thus: قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَكَ هٰذَا الَّذِىْ كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ اَخَّرْتَنِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَاَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَآءً مَّوْفُوْرًا وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَاَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا اِنَّ عِبَادِىْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيْلًا (He said: “Just see! Is this the one who you honoured above me? If you give me respite until the Day of Judgement, I shall consume all his progeny except a few.” God said: “Very Well! Those among them who follow you, then Hell is the full recompense for all of you. And whoever among them you can overpower, scare them with your commotion; bring upon them your riders and pedestrians, become a partner in their wealth and children and make promises with them. And the promises Satan makes with them are nothing but deception. Indeed, you will not have any power over My own servants and as a guardian, sufficient is your Lord.”)

From these verses, the extent and intensity of Satan’s propaganda can be gauged. Also evident from it is that he will use political gimmicks too in order to realize his mission. However, there is one element of assurance in it: God has not given Satan the authority to prevail over the will of human beings. The latter will have the freedom of will to choose their way. Hence, those servants of God Who will resolve to tread the path of monotheism will adhere to it in spite of all the machinations of Satan, even if they have to put their life in danger.

The true meaning of the words “and You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You” is: “and You will find most of them not to be monotheists.” This is because the essence of monotheism is that a person regards all his favours to be a blessing of God and remains thankful to Him. If he attributed these favours to anyone other than God, then this would be tantamount to polytheism. This issue has been discussed earlier and further ahead in the *sūrah* also some very important aspects will be referred to. Readers may take a look at verse 10.

Consider the words: “God said: “Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.” The answer to the arrogant challenge thrown by Satan earlier is replied with majesty and authority by God. It is evident from these words that this decision of God is absolute. There is no possibility of any concession in it.

وَيٰۤاٰدَمُ اسۡكُنۡ اَنۡتَ وَزَوۡجُكَ الۡجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنۡ حَيۡثُ شِئۡتُمَا وَلَا تَقۡرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوۡنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسۡوَسَ لَهُمَا
الشَّيۡطٰنُ لِيُبۡدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وٗرِيَ عَنۡهُمَا مِنۡ سَوۡاٰتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهٰكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنۡ هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَا مَلَكَيۡنِ اَوۡ تَكُوۡنَا
مِنَ الۡخٰلِدِيۡنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَاسَمَهُمَاۤ اِنِّيۡ لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيۡنَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوۡرٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتۡ لَهُمَا سَوۡاٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا
يَخۡصِفٰنِ عَلَيۡهِمَا مِنۡ وَّرَقِ الۡجَنَّةِ ؕ وَنَادٰىهُمَا رَبُّهُمَاۤ اَلَمۡ اَنۡهَكُمَا عَنۡ تِلۡكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَاَقُلۡ لَّكُمَاۤ اِنَّ الشَّيۡطٰنَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿٢٢﴾
قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمۡنَاۤ اَنۡفُسَنَا ٜ وَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَغۡفِرۡ لَنَا وَتَرۡحَمۡنَا لَنَكُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهۡبِطُوۡا بَعۡضُكُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَلَكُمۡ فِي
الۡاَرۡضِ مُسۡتَقَرٌّ وَّمَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيۡنٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيۡهَا تَحۡيَوۡنَ وَفِيۡهَا تَمُوۡتُوۡنَ وَمِنۡهَا تُخۡرَجُوۡنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[11]

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[11] And O Adam! Dwell with your wife in the garden and eat in it from wherever you want. But both of you do not go near this tree otherwise you both will become unjust to your own selves. Thus Satan whispered to them to open to them what had been hidden to them from their

These verses narrate the next part of the anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan. The purpose of narrating it has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. However, things that were not discussed there will be explained here.

The connotation of the word “tree” is discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

It is evident from “and eat in it from wherever you want” that both Adam (sws) and Eve could benefit from anthing in Paradise they wanted to. They were just stopped from going near one tree and it was this tree that became a trial for them. Satan delivered such a stirring speech on the benefits of this forbidden tree that Adam (sws) could not abide by his promise with God. Satan uses the same technique with Adam’s progeny in this world. Everything of this world is permissible for them except a few things. It is these few things that Satan and his accomplices use to lure them. He tries to convince them that the secret of their success actually hinges on these prohibited things.

Even though after being regarded as accursed Satan had been expelled from Paradise, he had gained the oportunity to lead astray Adam (sws) and his progeny, as is mentioned earlier. It is evident from this respite that there was no hindrance for Satan to reach Adam (sws) and Eve. Thus he took advantage of this respite and whispered his luring suggestion to him.

In the clause لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُرِيَ عَنْهُمَا the ل is for consequence. Satan wanted to entice Adam (sws) to show disobedience and ingratitude to God. However, since this manifested in Adam (sws) and Eve being divested of the robes of Paradise, it is stated here that Satan had actually striven for this. It is evident from being divested of these robes that now Adam (sws) will have to provide for his needs through his efforts. Until then, everything had been arranged by God. This ended after his disobedience.

Consider the words: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” It is evident from this that in spite of having the honour of being prostrated by the angels, Adam (sws) regarded angels to be higher in status to him. Moreover, he knew that the life that had been given was not eternal. Were this not the case, Satan would never have used both these premises to entice him.

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private parts. He said to them: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” And he swore to them repeatedly and said: “I am from among your well-wishers.” By deceiving them in this way, he enticed both of them. Thus when they tasted the fruit of the tree, their private parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden. And their Lord called them: “Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?” Both cried out: “Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers.” He said: “Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there.” He said: “You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it.”

Consider the words: وَ قَاسَمَهُمَآ اِنِّيْ لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ. The verb قَاسَمَ is from the *mufā‘alah* form. This form generally signifies sharing. However, sometimes it is only used to signify multiplicity and exaggeration. Thus it is evident from this verb that Satan had to make a great effort to create his credibility. He had to repeatedly swear to convince Adam (sws) and Eve that whatever he was telling them was based on his sincerity and there was nothing malafide in it.

Consider next, the idiom فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوْرٍ. The expression دلی فلان بغرور would mean اوقعه فيما اراد من تغريره (he deceived him in whatever way he wanted).

Consider next, the sentence: فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَ طَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ. Tasting the tree means to taste the fruit of the tree. It is common to suppress the governing noun (*muḍāf*) in Arabic. The verb خصف means “to join and to fasten.” This tree was forbidden to Adam (sws) and Eve, as is referred to earlier. So when they violated this directive, they were deprived of their attire of Paradise. The basic purpose of clothes is to hide body parts and hence a sudden deprivation from them creates the feeling of shame in a person. Thus the whole situation is depicted by the words “their private parts became evident to them.” After them, the words “and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden” depict the timidity and bewilderment with which both were overcome with at this sudden incident. As soon as they realized their nakedness, they started to cover themselves with whatever they could lay their hands on. When they could find nothing else, they used leaves to do so. It is evident from this that the feeling of hiding one’s private parts is a natural instinct. Those who say that it is an acquired habit are not correct in their view. Just as monotheism is a natural instinct and polytheism is an artificially acquired dogma, in a similar way, feeling shame is natural and shamelessness is what something a person adopts artificially.

The words “and their Lord called them: ‘Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?’” refer to the warnings mentioned in verses 17 to 19. The nature of enmity of Satan with Adam (sws) had also been explained as well as the fate of those who would follow him and his followers. At the same time, the tree which could pose danger to them was also pin-pointed.

The words: “Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers” signify the repentance of Adam (sws) and Eve once they had been rebuked by God for breaking their promise. This repentance has been referred to in Sūrah al-Baqarah. It has been discussed there in detail. Through this repentance Adam (sws) won a round that he had lost. It has already been mentioned about Iblīs that in spite of the rebuke, he became arrogant but Adam (sws) and Eve expressed their regret on their blemish and sought God’s forgiveness. It has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah that their repentance was accepted and God showed mercy to them. In this way, Adam (sws) set an example for his progeny that if a person stumbles at the luring of Satan, then the way out is repentance.

Detailed discussion on “Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there” can be seen in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah (30-39). Though God accepted the prayer for repentance of Adam (sws) and Eve, God’s wisdom entailed that they go out of Paradise and they and their progeny compete against Satan and his progeny; then those among them who defeat the latter be worthy of Paradise. In other words, the contest was the same which Iblīs had challenged them for; however, its locus was shifted from Paradise to earth and Paradise was regarded as the reward for those who would succeed in this contest. The words “as enemies of one another” show that Adam (sws) and Iblīs were sent in this world as two disputing parties. The latter was given the opportunity to lead as many as he could from the progeny of Adam (sws). On the other hand, Adam’s progeny was given the opportunity to regain their lost heritage of Paradise by defeating the designs of Iblīs.

Here one misunderstanding that the Christians were inflicted with must be dispelled: they think that human beings like Satan were also sent in this world as accursed beings. In order to get rid of this stigma, they invented the baseless belief of atonement. The Qur’ān, both here and in Sūrah al-Baqarah, has clearly stated that Adam (sws) came in this world after being forgiven. Also, the purpose of sending him and his progeny in this world was that they through resolve and determination prove themselves worthy of the honour God blessed them with and which became the reason for Satan’s jealousy.

Consider the part: “You will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there.” He said: ‘You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it.’” It depicts the phases through which Adam and his progeny will pass in this world. In other words, after they return, they would be informed by God what they gained and lost and if they won or lost.

Section III: Verses (26-43)

In these verses, things which Adam’s progeny had been informed of with regard to Satan’s enmity at the very beginning are reminded of. It was essential that these things be adhered to if people wanted to succeed in the imminent test and remain secure from the trial faced by their progenitor Adam (sws) at the hands of his foremost enemy: Satan.

After that, it is said that the Quraysh – who are the real addressees of this *sūrah* – had ignored these directives. The consequence was that Satan successfully led them astray and disrobed them in the very way he did their progenitors: Adam (sws) and Eve. However, because of their foolishness, they think that they have indulged in this vulgarity not by following Satan but by following God. The only proof they have of this is that it was this way which they had inherited from their forefathers.

After that, the essence and cardinal principle is alluded to which is always kept in consideration about all divine directives and which is the benchmark that distinguishes them from Satanic innovations. Thereafter, by applying this standard to Satanic innovations which the Quraysh were regarding as God’s religion, it is asserted that none of these things has even the remotest of relationship with God. They have invented all these innovations under the guidance of Satan and have falsely ascribed them to God. At the same time, they are warned that if they do not mend their ways, they will meet the same fate as that of nations similar to them.

After that God has referred to His covenant that was made at the time when Adam (sws) was sent in this battlefield: He would send a series of messengers to guide mankind and those who follow them would remain secure from the trials of Satan and those who deny them would be consigned to Hell.

Next, a very effective picture of what will happen to the rejecters and followers of God’s messengers is portrayed. About the first group, it is stated that when they will be united in Hell, they will curse one another. Those who today follow their leaders with great pride will abuse them at that time. They would say that had these leaders not led them astray, they would have been guided. In response, the leaders will abuse the followers that they themselves are to be blamed: if they did not adopt the path of guidance, it was not their fault. The second group is depicted as happily sitting facing one another. There will not be the slightest trace of any hate or rebuke. They would be merrily greeting and congratulating one another. Every nook and corner would be resounding with the Almighty’s gratitude and with the acknowledgment of the favours of His messengers.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ وَرِيْشًا ؕ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ۙ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَآ اَخْرَجَ اَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا
سَوْاٰتِهِمَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَاِذَا
فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَآ اٰبَآءَنَا وَاللّٰهُ اَمَرَنَا بِهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَاْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ ؕ اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ قُلْ اَمَرَ رَبِّيْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۟ وَاَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۬ؕ كَمَا
بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَرِيْقًا هَدٰى وَفَرِيْقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلٰلَةُ ؕ اِنَّهُمُ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَ
يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا
يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِيْنَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْٓ اَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهٖ وَالطَّيِّبٰتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ؕ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي

الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ
مِنْهَا وَ مَا بَطَنَ وَ الْاِثْمَ وَ الْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَ اَنْ تُشْرِكُوْا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا وَّ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَ لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّ لَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ يٰبَنِيْۤ اٰدَمَ اِمَّا
يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَ اَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَاۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ
كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيْبُهُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ ۙ قَالُوْۤا اَيْنَ مَا
كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا وَ شَهِدُوْا عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالَ ادْخُلُوْا فِيْۤ اُمَمٍ
قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْاِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ ؕ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۙ
قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰۤؤُلَآءِ اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ۬ؕ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّ لٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾
وَ قَالَتْ اُوْلٰىهُمْ لِاُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ السَّمَآءِ وَ لَا يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتّٰى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِيْ سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ؕ وَ
كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ ؕ وَ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَاۤ ۫ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَ نَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ
صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ وَ قَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ هَدٰىنَا لِهٰذَا ۫ وَ مَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْ لَاۤ اَنْ
هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ ۚ لَقَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَ نُوْدُوْۤا اَنْ تِلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ اُوْرِثْتُمُوْهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Children of Adam ! We have sent down attire for you which covers embellishes you. Moreover, it is the attire of piety which is even better than this. It is a sign from among the signs of God so that they may be reminded. Children of Adam ! Let Satan never lure you the way he ousted your father and mother from the garden by exposing their private parts to them by making them take off their attire. He and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them. We have made the devils the companions of those who are bereft of faith. (26-27)

And when these people do something vulgar, they say: “We found our forefathers on this way and to this God has directed us.” Say: God never directs to vulgarity. Do you accuse God of which you know nothing? Say: God has commanded fairness in every matter, and to face Him near every mosque and to call Him by showing obedience to Him only. And the way He initiated you, you will return. He guided one faction and another was led astray. Instead of God, they made devils their companions and think that they are rightly guided. Children of Adam ! Wear your clothes at the time of your presence in every mosque. And eat and drink but do not cross the limits. God does not like those who cross limits. Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles? Say: They are for the believers also even in this world and on the Day of Judgement, they shall be theirs alone. Thus do We explain Our revelations for those who want to know. Say: My Lord has only forbidden lewd acts, whether open or hidden and usurping rights and wrongful oppression and that you associate with God that for which He did not send down any sanction and that you fabricate something about God that you know not. And a time has been appointed for each nation. Then once their time ends, even for a moment they can neither be pushed back nor moved forward. (28-34)

Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved. And those who deny Our revelations and arrogantly turn away from them are the ones who are the dwellers of Hell. They shall abide therein forever. So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief. It will be ordered: “Go, enter Hell with all those groups of men and jinn who lived before you.” Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its fellow group. Until when all are gathered there, their later ones will say about the earlier ones: “Our Lord! It is these people who led us astray; so inflict a two-fold punishment on them.” He will say: “For each of you is a two-fold punishment but you know not.” And their earlier ones will say to the later ones: “You too could not acquire any superiority on us; so, taste the flavour of punishment in retribution of what you did.” (35-39)

Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers. For them shall be the bedding of Hell and also their very covering from above. And this is how We punish the unjust. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity – it is they who are the companions of Paradise. They shall abide in it forever. We shall banish every grievance of their hearts. Rivers will be flowing beneath them and they will say: “Gratitude be to God who guided us to this. Had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided.” The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth. And they will be given the message: “This is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds.” (40-43)

Explanation

يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ وَ رِيْشًا ؕ وَ لِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ۙ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَآ اَخْرَجَ اَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْاٰتِهِمَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[12]

The word ريش is used for the wings of birds and it also refers to decorated clothes. The foremost purpose of clothes is to cover the body. However, embellishment is also included in its purposes. God has given various facets to whatever He has created, and all these facets are in accordance with the requirements of human nature. A loin cloth was also enough to cover the body but in order to perfect His favours, God arranged for clothes for us. It would not only cover our bodies and protect them, but would also enhance our personalities and our splendour and dignity. None of these objectives in itself is wrong. However, just as going to both extremes creates disorder in everything, in clothes too this disorder results. By including embellishment in the objective of clothes, the Qur’ān has negated the ascetic style of life, which regards clothes to be a stigma and nudity or semi-nudity to be religiously sacred.

Besides an outward attire, human beings are also blessed with an inner one and that is the attire of piety. It is far superior to the inner one. This is because it is this attire of piety that delineates the real benefit of the outward attire. In fact, a person wears this outer attire because of a drive from the inward attire. If this does not exist, then a person is naked in spite of wearing clothes, and instead of his clothes increasing his dignity, they either increase his arrogance or his ugliness. This attire of piety emanates from modesty, fear of God and a sense of servitude to Him. A person who is blessed with this attire from God is worth observing with regard to his grace and splendour. In the attires worn by human beings, it is like an angel and whoever sees it, impulsively calls out the words spoken by the women of Egypt for Joseph (sws): “this is not a human being; he is a noble angel.”

Consider the words “it is a sign from among the signs of God so that they may be reminder.” What is reminded from among what is said above is from among those things to which the progeny of Adam (sws) were directed when he was sent in this world. The purpose is warn the Quraysh that they have been inflicted with the same trial with which Satan had inflicted Adam (sws). It may be kept in consideration that some of the directives which were given to Adam (sws) and his progeny at the time he was made to inhabit the earth are referred to in the Qur’ān. Thus for example in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is stated: قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, their reward is Paradise. So, there they shall neither have any fear, nor shall they grieve.”) Precisely the same guidance is mentioned in verse 35 of the *sūrah* under explanation: يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ اِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ.[13] In my opinion, here too the same guidance is being referred which was given to the progeny of Adam (sws). The purpose was that they could secure themselves from the trials similar to the ones with which Adam (sws) and Eve were afflicted. The Quraysh are now being reminded of the same guidance to warn them that they too have been lured by Satan with the same spell he had weaved over Adam (sws).

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[12] Children of Adam ! We have sent down attire for you which embellishes you. Moreover, it is the attire of piety which is even better than this. It is a sign from among the signs of God so that they may be reminded. Children of Adam ! Let Satan never lure you the way he ousted your father and mother from the garden by exposing their private parts to them by making them take off their attire. He and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them. We have made the devils the companions of those who are bereft of faith.

The words of address “Children of Adam ” should be kept in mind. The incidents and events that occur in the life of a father are the strongest means of learning a lesson for the children. This story is the story of the whole family. In the form of an indelible tradition, sincere children preserve the practice of friendship with the friends of the father and enmity with his foes. They preserve this etched in their minds and transmit it to later generations and in fact urge them to carry on with this process. So dearly held is this tradition amongst the Arabs that they do not even distinguish the good and evil in it. The enemy of the forefathers will be considered an enemy if this enmity had some convincing basis. So it is a matter of great sorrow if human beings forget the enmity of Satan and his progeny with their progenitor – an enmity which was entirely based on malice and jealousy, which was not concealed but was fully exposed and which was not specifically meant for Adam (sws) and Eve but for all their progeny until the Day of Judgement. Moreover, the matter does not end on forgetting this fact; such is the extent of the insolence, defiance and wretchedness of the children that many among them have actually befriended this enemy and his associates. They regard them to be their confidants and well-wishers. At the bidding of Satan, they are leading themselves to ruin in precisely the same way as he had intended for Adam (sws). And Adam (sws) would have fallen into the pit of this ruin had not God’s mercy saved him. Such is the unmatched eloquence of the Qur’ān that just two words يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ have concealed all these implications in them. When every honourable and sincere son of Adam (sws) reads these words of address and the reminders they sound, his blood boils against Satan. It is only the dishonourable and the insolent who do not budge even after this address.

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[13] Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved.

As indicated earlier, the words “Children of Adam ! Let Satan never lure you the way he ousted your father and mother from the garden by exposing their private parts to them by making them take off their attire” are from those things which the children of Adam (sws) were reminded of in the very beginning. Evident from the style of these words is the scheme which Satan adopts to destroy the culture and society and to ultimately deprive it of God’s favours: he first strips people off the attire of piety which the Almighty has revealed as an internal honour for them together with the exterior attire. This has been referred to earlier. When this internal attire is taken off, modesty and bashfulness – which are the actual prompters of the external attire – are sacrificed. At that instance, this external attire becomes a burden. Vulgarity impels a person to expose his or her private parts – hiding which is actually part of human nature. After that fashion comes to their rescue and human beings wear such clothes that even after wearing them, they appear naked. Clothes are not merely worn to cover the body but to indecently expose it as much as possible. Then gradually people become bereft of intellect to such an extent that nudity becomes the name of culture and clothes become a symbol of obsolete traditions. Then literate devils rise and in the light of history say that nudity is real human nature; clothes have been adopted by them as restrictions imposed by their traditions. It is at this instant that the whole society is impregnated with the poison of lust and lewdness. Then such a shameless society becomes worthy of being exterminated from the face of the earth and be replaced by others to check their deeds.

The words “he and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them” refer to the cunning, wily and conniving nature of Satan and his accomplices: such is the multiplicity and variety of their garbs and the places of their onslaughts that people can neither recognize them in all these apparels nor can remain on guard regarding all these attacks. The army of Satan boasts both of jinn and mankind. They will sit in ambush at places where people will not be able to spot them. They will regard them to be friends, well-wishers, teachers, leaders and the like, while they are after severing the roots of their faith. People will think that they are paving the way for development and advancement whereas they will be after mercilessly decimating them. They will know all the inner weaknesses of human beings and will try to inveigle them through evil suggestions. They will also try to spin a web of charm around them to make them get caught in it. In short, mankind should not take Satan’s enmity lightly and always remain on guard.

The words “We have made the devils the companions of those who are bereft of faith” guide human beings how they can secure themselves from the onslaughts of Satan and his accomplices: they must strongly adhere to faith. It refers to faith in God and in the guidance revealed by Him. This is a reference to what has been stated in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّىْ هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, for them there shall neither be any fear nor shall they grieve). The words under discussion refer to the fact that only people who deprive themselves of faith become a target of Satan. Their hearts are like empty houses and hence devils populate them. On the other hand, people whose hearts are replete with faith in God and in His guidance remain secure from Satan and his accomplices. This is stated in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf as well in the following words: وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ (and he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion).

وَاِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَآ اٰبَآءَنَا وَاللّٰهُ اَمَرَنَا بِهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَاْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ ؕ اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾
قُلْ اَمَرَ رَبِّيْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۟ وَاَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ؕ كَمَا بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَرِيْقًا هَدٰى وَ
فَرِيْقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلٰلَةُ ؕ اِنَّهُمُ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[14]

After the Quraysh were sounded with the reminders mentioned earlier, these verses depict how Satan had led them astray and how they ended up befriending him. The fact is that he deceived them just as he had deceived their parents – Adam and Eve. He was instrumental in making them take off their clothes in Paradise and now he has succeeded in making the Quraysh take off their clothes in the House of God. The irony is that they think that this is a tradition of their forefathers and a directive of God. The fact is that this is not His directive at all; it is a trial from Satan. Through it, he wanted to expel them from the House of God just as he was able to expel Adam and Eve from Paradise.[15]

The word فَاحِشَةً refers to blatant lewdness and even the blind and foolish regard it to be so. Our exegetes think that it refers to the tradition of circumabulating the House of God while being naked. This tradition was found in Arab *jāhiliyyah*. This opinion seems to be correct since it is this very shameless act which they regarded to be a directive of God, as this verse says. Though the Quraysh themselves considered themselves to be above this directive, they regarded it to be applicable to others. Their edict was that Arabs who did not belong to the Quraysh tribe must not wear their own

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14. And when these people do something vulgar, they say: “We found our forefathers on this way and to this God has directed us.” Say: God never directs to vulgarity. Do you accuse God of which you know nothing? Say: God has commanded fairness in every matter, and to face Him near every mosque and to call Him by showing obedience to Him only. And the way He initiated you, you will return. He guided one faction and another was led astray. Instead of God, they made devils their companions and think that they are rightly guided.

15. Here it should be kept in mind that the House of God is a surrogate of the fountain of Kawthar in Paradise, as he been substantiated by Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Kawthar.

clothes. Either they should borrow it from the Quraysh or circumabulate the House of God while being naked. It was as if such clothes as worn by the outsiders were a sign of worldly adornment and would violate the sanctity of worship. This was a very despicable form of an ascetic practice the likes of which can be found in the history of temples and churches. All of them were fabricated by the diabolic intentions of their priests and worshippers but were conferred with the sanctity of religion. The keepers of the shrines too promoted these fiendish practices. The result of this religious innovation was that even a ritual as sacred as circumambulation was contaminated with vice. This became so deeply rooted in their culture that such vices became part of their vulgar poetry. If a person reads it, he becomes amazed how Satan infiltrated in the House of God in the garb of sanctity and how successfully he transformed the greatest worship ritual for God into his own worship. Yet none bothered at what happened. This is what it meant by the words "he and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them" of verse 27.

The words "say: God never directs to vulgarity; do you accuse God of which you know nothing?" show that al directives of God are in accordance with the dictates of His attributes and of human nature; He never directs people to shamelessness. When none of His attributes tolerates vulgarity, how can he ask people to put up a display of vulgarity? When such is the human nature created by Him that no human being – from birth to death – likes to be naked before others, how can God order him to be naked and that too in the vicinity of His own House? How can the Quraysh associate such an act of indecency with God and His noble attributes and with upright human nature? This is a baseless allegation.

The word قسط (*qisṭ*) has been fully discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. Since God is *qā'im bi al-qisṭ* (adherent to fairness), all His directives are also based on fairness. *Qisṭ* is an all-embracing reality which is also the essence of the *sharī‘ah*. In other words, everything should be based on balance and equity. It does not relate to just one aspect of life. It is inclusive of beliefs, deeds, morality, worship as well as directives related to economics, politics and society. Thus, for example, here it said: وَ اَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ. This means that when God is the master, then it is against fairness to worship someone other than Him. On this very value are the words كَمَا بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ based. They mean that it is the requisite of fairness that when God has created human beings, provided them with the means of their sustenance and growth and given them the awareness of good and evil, then He should hold them accountable and reward or punish them. If He does not do this, it would be injustice and not fairness. Readers may see that further ahead in the next verse, again on fairness the words خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ and كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا are based. In other words, it is against fairness that clothes be forsaken for God's worship or eating and drinking be abandoned. *Qisṭ* means that a person eats and drinks but does not go to extremes. This is against fairness. In short, fairness is a barometer through which a person who is aware of the wisdom of religion will come to know what is from God and what is not.

Consider the words “face Him near every mosque and to call Him by showing obedience to Him only.” *Qisṭ* is a comprehensive concept, as alluded to earlier. Its foremost requisite is that none should be included in the rights of God. Worship is only His right. None else is worthy of it. For this reason, neither can a mosque be built for someone other than God nor can anyone intend to face anyone else during worship. Prostration is due before God only and hence a mosque by its very nature is specific for God. Thus in verse 18 of Sūrah al-Jinn the words are: وَّاَنَّ الْمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدًا.[16] After وَاَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ, words to the effect: إلى الله وحده are suppressed. This is because in the next sentence, the words مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ occur in parallel to them and indicate this suppression. They show that it is not just God’s worship that entails sincerity, His obedience also entails sincerity; none else can be included in it.

The words “and the way He initiated you, you will return” reinforce the concept of monotheism. In other words, people must worship and show obedience to God alone because He has created them and towards Him they all will return; just as they came into this world alone, they will go back to Him alone; none of their alleged deities and intercessors will be with them. Such is the magnificent eloquence of the Qur’ān that in this brief sentence not only the relationship between the hereafter and monotheism is explained, but a very evident proof of the hereafter is also pointed to.

Consider the words “He guided one faction and another was led astray; instead of God, they made devils their companions and think that they are rightly guided.” They mean that the real thing has been alluded to above and God has also given a faction the urge to profess faith in it; however, one faction was led astray; it has befriended the devils and these devils have entangled them in the same way Iblīs had threatened to entangle them. In other words, if these people do not abstain from this ignorant attitude, they will definitely meet the fate destined for such wretched people.

يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِيْنَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْٓ
اَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهٖ وَالطَّيِّبٰتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۭ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْاِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَاَنْ تُشْرِكُوْا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ
سُلْطٰنًا وَّاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاۗءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[17]

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[16] And that mosques are only for the worship of God so invoke not any one with God.

[17] Children of Adam ! Wear your clothes at the time of your presence in every mosque. And eat and drink but do not cross the limits. God does not like those who cross limits. Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles? Say: They are for the believers also even in this world and on the Day of Judgement, they shall be theirs alone. Thus do We explain Our revelations for

The address: “O Children of Adam” is directed to the Quraysh and the Arabs. The eloquence of using the word “Adam” is the same that was pointed to before: it reminds us of the anecdote of Adam and Eve which is a common anecdote for all mankind. It gives this message to every human being that Satan is their eternal enemy. Befriending and following him means befriending the enemy of their father.

The word زينت (*zīnah*) does not mean adorned clothes. It refers to mere clothes. Clothes are called adornment because the philosophy of circumambulating the House of God in the nude was fashioned out by believing that clothes were an adornment and adornment is not befitting for worship. Ascetic tendencies in the ritual of *ḥajj* and in wearing the *iḥrām* already existed since the time of Abraham (sws) and are a characteristic of the *ḥajj*; however, just as the Arabs had invented many religious innovations in the age of *jāhiliyyah*, they also fashioned out the innovation of stripping men and women off *iḥrām*. In these verses, the Qur’an has tried to reform this innovation. It says that nudity is a matter of indecency; people must wear clothes whenever they go to a mosque. Just as a mosque cannot be for someone other than God, the condition that a person enter it naked cannot be imposed. By using the expression “every mosque” the directive was generalized and was not made specific to the House of God. This is a total refutation of the monastic philosophy that regards nudity to be a means of nearness to God.

The words “and eat and drink but do not cross the limits; God does not like those who cross limits” imply that just as clothes are not against piety and religiosity, eating and drinking and benefiting from God’s favours are also not against religiosity. What is against it is going to an extreme in these matters. This is because this attitude is against *qisṭ*, which is the essence of all directives of religion. God adheres to fairness and hence He likes those who adhere to it. He does not like those who cross the limits of justice and fairness. This imbalance refers to both extremes: doing something very little or crossing the limits in doing it. God dislikes both. Neither does He like that a person make eating, drinking and clothing a purpose of his life and spend all his time in these; nor does He want a person to forsake them like ascetics. He wants moderation in every sphere of life.

The question as to what is moderation and what is extreme in these matters has been left to human nature and intellect and nothing is prescribed in this matter in the legal sense. It can vary with respect to circumstances and from person to person. A rich person and a person in want are not required to follow the same standard in this regard. However, Islam’s demand from every rich person is that others have a right in

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those who want to know. Say: My Lord has only forbidden lewd acts, whether open or hidden and usurping rights and wrongful oppression and that you associate with God that for which He did not send down any sanction and that you fabricate something about God that you know not. And a time has been appointed for each nation. Then once their time ends, even for a moment they can neither be pushed back nor moved forward.

his wealth. Thus he can benefit from it but not overspend or spend on wrong things because God does not befriend such people. This actually means that He is very angry with them.

The question “Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles?” is meant for negation. In other words, the implication is that none except God has the authority to do so. If it is God Who gives these things, only He has the right to proscribe them. The words “that God has created for His servants” are cited as an argument. The implication is that these things by their very existence bear witness that they have been made by God for people; so how can someone impose unfounded restrictions on them? Only their giver can impose any restrictions and for this it is essential that people have a proof from Him.

There are some linguistic suppressions in قُلْ هِىَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ. Here parallel words to لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا and خَالِصَةً are suppressed. If this is taken into account, the meaning of the verse will be: “In this world also, all favours of God are primarily the right of the believers but God has given a share in them to the disbelievers; as far as the next world is concerned, these favours will be entirely for the believers and the disbelievers will have no share in them. However, they will be answerable for them regarding the benefit they obtained from them in this world. In other words, benefitting from them in this world is not against religiosity. Those who regard the pleasures and favours of this world to be allurements and think that God’s nearness can only be procured if they are forsaken, are mistaken. The correct attitude in this regard is to benefit from them but not over indulge in them. One should be moderate in this regard and continue to discharge the rights of God and of his fellow human beings.

The words “thus do We explain Our revelations ” are meant to assure the believers and the verb “explain” signifies intention.

Next what God has regarded as prohibited are pointed out the style adopted is that the Quraysh have regarded as lawful and in fact part of religion and the things regarded lawful by Him are considered unlawful by them in their garb of religiosity.

Among these prohibited things are فواحش (lewd acts), whether they are apparent or hidden. Both these types have been explained in verse 151 of Sūrah al-An‘ām.

The word بغى (translated as oppression) means rebelliousness. It means to rebel against the directives of God. It is qualified by the adjective “wrongful.” This does not mean that some forms of rebelliousness are not wrongful. The adjective actually serves to signify the heinous nature of rebelliousness. This is because every form of rebelliousness in itself is wrongful. It is not permissible for anyone to show arrogance before God and cross the bounds prescribed by Him. Just as this adjective has been used with the killing of prophets, it is used here.

As far as believing in God is concerned, it is a logical requisite of human intellect and nature. An idolater also believes in God. As for ascribing partners to God is concerned, it needs proof and that too of a conclusive nature. This is because such a belief decimates the whole system of human intellect and nature as well as of justice and fairness. Such a belief can only be accepted if it has some logical, natural or religious basis.

The words “fabricate something about God that you know not” means to regard something as lawful or unlawful or to invent religious innovations while following one’s whims, author the dictates of religion and ascribe all these things to God. These words also express the need for prophets and messengers: when it is not permissible to ascribe something to God without proof, then it is essential that messengers be sent by Him and be followed.

It has been explained in the introductory part of the *sūrah* that it primarily warns the Quraysh. What is stated above is merely a charge sheet meant to leave them with no excuse. For this reason, the discourse turns to its primary topic repeatedly.

Consider the part: “and a time has been appointed for each nation; then once their time ends, even for a moment they can neither be pushed back nor moved forward.” Just as in verse 29 earlier, the words “and the way He initiated you, you will return” remind the Quraysh of the hereafter, the part under discussion reminds them of an established practice of God: if in spite of all the mischief they are spreading, they are not being seized, they should not think that they would never be called to account. If this established practice of God was fulfilled for all rebellious nations, as mentioned in verse 4-9, it will necessarily be fulfilled for them as well. The respite they have been given is because a time of destruction for every nation has been fixed. When that time arrives, it will not be pushed back or moved forward.

Here the word أجل is used for the time fixed. It should be kept in mind that his prescribed time is different for individuals and nations. For the former, it is determined in years, months, days, hours and minutes. Once this time expires, an individual dies. The matter of nations is different. Their time is determined on the basis of decadence of their faith and morals. There is a certain limit to this. Once a nation reaches that, it is destroyed. Just as the time of death of individuals is known to God only, the time of death of nations too is in His knowledge only. Only He knows when a nation has reached the limit after which its existence in this world is against divine wisdom. Here readers may keep in mind God’s established practice referred to in this exegesis a number of times: when a messenger is sent to a nation, it signifies conclusive communication of the truth to it. Thus, when a nation denies its respective messenger, it is destroyed forthwith by the Almighty. More details on this issue are found in the exegesis of Sūrah Yūnus.

يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ اِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَ

الَّذِیۡنَ کَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰیٰتِنَا وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرُوۡا عَنۡهَاۤ اُولٰٓئِکَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمۡ فِیۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ فَمَنۡ اَظۡلَمُ مِمَّنِ افۡتَرٰی عَلَی اللّٰهِ
کَذِبًا اَوۡ کَذَّبَ بِاٰیٰتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ یَنَالُهُمۡ نَصِیۡبُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡکِتٰبِ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُنَا یَتَوَفَّوۡنَهُمۡ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُمۡ
تَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوۡا ضَلُّوۡا عَنَّا وَ شَهِدُوۡا عَلٰۤی اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ اَنَّهُمۡ کَانُوۡا کٰفِرِیۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾[18]

These verses are a reminder of the promise made by God with Adam (sws) and his progeny when he was being expelled from Paradise. In verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, this is referred to as: قُلۡنَا اهۡبِطُوۡا مِنۡهَا جَمِیۡعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا یَاۡتِیَنَّکُمۡ مِّنِّیۡ هُدًی فَمَنۡ تَبِعَ هُدَایَ فَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَیۡهِمۡ وَ لَا هُمۡ یَحۡزَنُوۡنَ (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, their reward is Paradise. So, there they shall neither have any fear, nor shall they grieve.”) This promise of sending His messengers was made by the Almighty with Adam (sws) and his progeny was to save them from the mischief of Satan. Deliberation on the anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan mentioned in this *sūrah* shows that human intellect and nature vouch for the need of this divine guidance. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have explained that the Almighty negated the notion of the angels about the progeny of Adam (sws) through pious individuals born to it. This promise was actually fulfilled by Him by sending a series of prophets from his progeny. Here the Quraysh are reminded of this. The implication is that Satan is in total control of them. The only way to secure themselves from him is to follow God’s messengers. In their case, a messenger has come to them who recites God’s revelations to them. If they want to be protected from the onslaughts of Satan, they must follow these revelations.

In verse 36, the preposition used with اسۡتِکۡبَار is عن which encompasses the meaning of evasion. The implication is that people who deny and arrogantly turn away from God’s revelations recited by His messengers will end up in Hell.

It has been stated that previous verses serve as a reminder for the Quraysh. Now from verse 37, the Quraysh are directly addressed: So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against

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[18] Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved. And those who deny Our revelations and arrogantly turn away from them are the ones who are the dwellers of Hell. They shall abide therein forever. So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief.

themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief.

Polytheism is called افتراء على الله (imputing falsehood to God).

The word رسل is used for angels in the Qur’ān at more than one instance. It may be kept in mind that words رسول and ملك have the same literal meaning. Here the purpose of using the plural رسل is to encompass angel of death and his squad. The words “all of them have been lost upon us” signify the confession of the Quraysh which they will utter from their tongues.

قَالَ ادْخُلُوْا فِيْۤ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْاِنْسِ فِی النَّارِ ؕ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا
جَمِيْعًا ۙ قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰۤؤُلَآءِ اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ؕ۬ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّ لٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَ
قَالَتْ اُوْلٰىهُمْ لِاُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ
اسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ السَّمَآءِ وَ لَا يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتّٰی يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِیْ سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ؕ وَ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾ لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ ؕ وَ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[19]

The words قَالَ ادْخُلُوْا فِيْۤ اُمَمٍ express the fate that people will meet. The *fā‘il* of the verb قَالَ is generally suppressed on such occasions to signify indifference on the part of the speaker.

In the first verse, two loci are mentioned: فِيْۤ اُمَمٍ and فِی النَّارِ. The first expresses who their companions will be. They will be those before them from among the jinn and men who had followed Satan. The second expresses the place they will land in: Hell fire. In other words, they will have the worst of companions and the worst of abodes.

Consider the words: كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا.

The word ادَّارَكُوْا is actually تداركوا. In the Arabic language, words undergo such changes. The expression تداركوا القوم means the preceding ones caught up with the later ones. In قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ the ل connotes فى implying that the later ones will say about the previous ones.

The word ضعف means “twice” and in the presence of concomitant indications can refer to more.

The verses depict a picture of the conversation that will take place when all of them would be gathered in the den of Hell. In the previous world, they were leaders and followers, companions and helpers, advocates and torch-bearers of one another. They would praise and congratulate one another. However, they will curse one another as soon as they will face each other. The followers will curse their leaders and the latter will call throw back the blame. They will call their followers as wretched and absolve themselves of leading them astray.

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[19] It will be ordered: “Go, enter Hell with all those groups of men and jinn who lived before you.” Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its fellow group. Until when all are gathered there, their later ones will say about the earlier ones: “Our Lord! It is these people who led us astray; so inflict a two-fold punishment on them.” He will say: “For each of you is a two-fold punishment but you know not.” And their earlier ones will say to the later ones: “You too could not acquire any superiority on us; so, taste the flavour of punishment in retribution of what you did.” Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers. For them shall be the bedding of Hell and also their very covering from above.

It should be kept in mind that both vice and virtue are contagious by their very nature. They not only influence their perpetrators but also others. So much so, after passing from generation to generation, a small speck of virtue can become a mountain and seed of vice sown can produce an expansive desert. It is this principle which is stated in a particular narrative of the Prophet (sws). In this narrative, he has stated the extent of the consequences of people who set up good or bad examples. He is reported to have said that whenever a killing takes place in this world, the first killer of humankind, Cain, gets some share from this vice and its sin accrues in his account. This is because he laid the foundations of this heinous crime by unjustifiably killing Abel. In the verse under discussion, this very aspect is referred to. Besides their own sins, both the earlier and later generations will get another share of sins. They implore that the previous generations set an evil example for them and hence should be given a two-fold punishment. True, they will get a two-fold punishment; however, how can they not be punished for the evil example they have further set for the later generations. The yardstick is the same for everyone. If they had realized the extent of influence of their own vices, they would have accepted that they were equal in their sin to the previous generations. However, they are showing indifference to this. But soon its evil consequences will come before them.

In verse 40, the preposition used with اسْتِكْبَار is عن. The implication of this usage has already been delineated above.

The words لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ السَّمَآءِ can have two meanings. Firstly, the gates of heaven will not be opened for them. Secondly, they will not be welcomed in the heavens the way believers would be; in fact, they would be humiliatingly dragged like criminals and ruffians to witness their fate. The tradition is that gates are very honorably opened for those who are meant to be given respect and people stand on both sides to welcome them. On other hand, those who are meant to be disgraced, they are shoved like prisoners into a jail. In other words, this is not a negation of the verb but that of the consequence of the verb. This means that they will not be welcomed in the heavens by their gates being opened for them to greet and congratulate them. On the contrary, they will be humiliatingly pushed into the gates of Hell.

In other words, the negation found in this sentence is not meant to negate the verb per se but the consequence of the verb. There are several examples of this usage in classical Arabic.

The words “and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle" are steeped in a special hyperbolic style. It means that it is impossible for such people to enter Paradise in the same way as it is impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The previous scriptures also employ this style. Thus, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew, 19:23-24)

The only difference in the style of the Qur'ān and the Bible is that Jesus (sws) has referred to the reason of arrogance which is wealth and the Qur'ān has referred to the real sin: arrogance. Earlier, in the episode of Adam (sws) and Satan, the essence of arrogance has been explained. It was shown there that the real reason because of which Satan was expelled from Paradise was arrogance. Hence, those who even have a semblance of arrogance in them will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise. Jesus (sws) is also reported to have said: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew, 5:3).

Consider now the words: لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِنۡ فَوۡقِهِمۡ غَوَاشٍ. The word مِهَادٌ means "a spreading" and غَوَاشٍ is the plural of غاشية. It means "a covering." Here it means "to cover." The implication is that Hell will be their covering from above and below.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفۡسًا اِلَّا وُسۡعَهَاۤ ۫ اُولٰٓـئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَـنَّةِ ۚ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَنَزَعۡنَا مَا فِىۡ
صُدُوۡرِهِمۡ مِّنۡ غِلٍّ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهِمُ الۡاَنۡهٰرُ ۚ وَقَالُوا الۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىۡ هَدٰٮنَا لِهٰذَا ۗ وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهۡتَدِىَ لَوۡلَاۤ اَنۡ هَدٰٮنَا
اللّٰهُ ۚ لَقَدۡ جَآءَتۡ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالۡحَـقِّ ؕ وَنُوۡدُوۡۤا اَنۡ تِلۡكُمُ الۡجَـنَّةُ اُوۡرِثۡتُمُوۡهَا بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿٤٣﴾[20]

Now these verses depict in parallel the fate of the believers. The words "and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity" form a parenthetical sentence and are meant for assurance. None should think that God imposes a responsibility on a person which is beyond his capacity.

The style implied in "We shall banish every grievance of their hearts" needs to be appreciated. Here the consequence of what is stated is meant. In other words, the people of Paradise will meet each other with great relish and love and welcome one another; they will sit facing one another and exchange words of affection; there will be no malice or grievance between them. In verse 47 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr, precisely this

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20. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity – it is they who are the companions of Paradise. They shall abide in it forever. We shall banish every grievance of their hearts. Rivers will be flowing beneath them and they will say: "Gratitude be to God who guided us to this. Had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided." The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth. And they will be given the message: "This is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds."

meaning is conveyed by the words: عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ (on thrones facing one another). Sitting while facing away from each other signifies grievance and sitting while staring one another signifies love and affection. The Qur’ān has referred to this latter state of the people of Paradise by adopting the style just explained. This state of theirs will be in exact parallel to the people of Hell who will curse one another.

The style adopted here can also be seen in verse 51 of this very *sūrah* فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوْا لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ (thus today We will forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting). Obviously, here the consequence of forgetting is implied: they will be ignored by the Almighty; otherwise what is the meaning of God forgetting someone? He does not forget anything. Similarly, in verse 152 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is said فَاذْكُرُوْنِيْٓ اَذْكُرْكُمْ (if you remember Me, I will remember you). In other words, He will look upon them with favour and help them at every instance; fulfil every promise made with them and furthermore bless them eternally.

The words “gratitude be to God who guided us to this” depict the words of thanksgiving expressed by a traveller after a long journey. The word “this” in this sentence refers not only to the urge seekers of the truth are blessed with but also to the guidance provided by God through His messengers and prophets. The words “had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided” refer to the perilous nature of the journey and also to the fact that the success achieved by the dwellers of Paradise would be so beyond their expectations and hopes that they will regard it to be purely a blessing of God; they will think not even think that it was their effort which earned them this success.

“The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth” is the proclamation made by the dwellers of Paradise after seeing every news given to them by messengers materialize. Encapsulated in this is also a warning for those whose denial and arrogance is mentioned above.

The words “this is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds” refer to God’s declaration for the dwellers of Paradise

Earlier the statement of the dwellers of Paradise is cited in which they regard Paradise to be God’s blessing on them and not the reward for their efforts. This verse says that God regards Paradise to be the reward of their efforts. In reality, this is a completion of favour. This verse elevates the status of the deeds of people to such an extent that a higher status cannot be imagined. Whatever we receive in this world is because of God’s grace, and in the Hereafter too it will be His grace that will bestow us with blessings, yet God regards it to be our right and the consequence of our hard work. Who can imagine the extent of the eternal kingdom about which each person thinks that he has earned it and that it is ever-abiding. A person does not merely want that he be given favours, he also wants to possess them personally. Without this feeling, he cannot truly take pleasure. God will fulfil this requisite of a person’s nature in Paradise.

The word “heir” used in this verse carries a very subtle insinuation to the episode of Adam (sws) and Satan. There it was indicated that only those people from the progeny of Adam (sws) will become an heir to the Paradise of their forefather who adhere to the straight path of faith and righteousness in spite of the lures of Satan. By using the word “heir” in this verse, they are congratulated that they have won the battle and now they are worthy heirs of Paradise.

Section IV: Verses (44-53)

In the succeeding verses, a conversation between the dwellers of Paradise and Hell is narrated. The dwellers of Paradise will inform the dwellers of Hell that all the promised God had made them have been fulfilled and will ask them if the promises He made with them were fulfilled or not. They will reply in the affirmative. After that, a person will proclaim God’s curse on them.

Next, it is stated that from the top of turrets a group of illustrious individuals will be made to observe what would ensue in Heaven and Hell so that they can see how God’s promises were fulfilled regarding the fate of people. These individuals will recognize the dwellers of Heaven and Hell through their distinctive signs. They will congratulate the companions of Heaven on their success and curse those of Hell. They will ask what benefit was their faction to them on which they do arrogantly relied. It was these people who repeatedly swore oaths to contend that the righteous could never be worthy of Heaven. They will be asked about where these people they made fun of have landed and where they themselves have landed.

After that, it is stated that the dwellers of Hell will beg for water and implore the dwellers of Paradise to show favour to them. They will reply that these things are forbidden by God to the dwellers of Paradise.

At the end, a warning is sounded that the account of Heaven and Hell narrated is a certain fact. It is not a hoax. It is God’s great favour that He has revealed a Book to them in order to guide them. What it convey is certain knowledge so that those who want to profess faith accept this guidance and become worthy of this mercy. The unfortunate part, however, is that these people because of their arrogance await that all these things told to them first materialize and then they will profess faith. However, that would be too late and they would end cursing themselves.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَنَادٰۤى اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَنَّةِ اَصۡحٰبَ النَّارِ اَنۡ قَدۡ وَجَدۡنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلۡ وَجَدۡتُّمۡ مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمۡ حَقًّا ؕ قَالُوۡا نَعَمۡ ۚ

فَاَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ لَّعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ
كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾ وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّاۢ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ ۚ وَنَادَوْا اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۫ لَمْ
يَدْخُلُوْهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ وَاِذَا صُرِفَتْ اَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۙ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ
نَادٰۤى اَصْحٰبُ الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَّعْرِفُوْنَهُمْ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ قَالُوْا مَاۤ اَغْنٰى عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ اَهٰۤؤُلَآءِ
الَّذِيْنَ اَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ ؕ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَاۤ اَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ وَنَادٰۤى اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ
اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ اَفِيْضُوْا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ اَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ الَّذِيْنَ
اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَّلَعِبًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوْا لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا ۙ وَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا
يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا تَاْوِيْلَهٗ ؕ يَوْمَ
يَاْتِيْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ نَسُوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ شُفَعَآءَ فَيَشْفَعُوْا لَنَاۤ اَوْ نُرَدُّ
فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

And the dwellers of Paradise will call out and ask the dwellers of Hell: “We found the promise God made with us to be absolutely true; did you also find the promise your Lord made with you to be true?” They will reply: “Yes.” Then a caller will call out between them: “The curse of God be on unjust people.” – on those who stop [people] from the way of God, want to create divergence in it and disbelieve in the Hereafter. (44-45)

And there will be a curtain-wall between them and on the turrets of the wall there will be some people who will recognize each person through his sign. And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: “God’s peace and mercy be upon you,” – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders. And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: “Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.” And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: “What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you would show. Are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” “Enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve.” (46-49)

And the dwellers of Hell will call out to the companions of Paradise: “Give us water or grant us some of what God has blessed you with.” They will reply: “God has forbidden both these things to the disbelievers.” – For those who made their religion an entertainment and amusement and who were deceived by the life of the world. Thus, today We shall forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting and the way they used to deny Our revelations – And We have delivered to them a Book which We have explained on the basis of certain knowledge, as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe. These people only wait to see its reality? The day its reality comes forth, people who had ignored it earlier will say: “Indeed, the messengers of our Lord had brought the absolute truth. Then are there any intercessors who may intercede in our favour or is there a possibility that we may be returned so that we do different to what we have being doing?” They inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished. (50-53)

Explanation

وَنَادٰۤی اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَنَّۃِ اَصۡحٰبَ النَّارِ اَنۡ قَدۡ وَجَدۡنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَہَلۡ وَجَدۡتُّمۡ مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّکُمۡ حَقًّا ؕ قَالُوۡا نَعَمۡ ۚ فَاَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌۢ بَیۡنَہُمۡ اَنۡ لَّعۡنَۃُ اللّٰہِ عَلَی الظّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿ۙ۴۴﴾[21]

This verse gives a brief description of the change of state a person’s abilities and potentials will undergo after he reaches Paradise. In this world, a person’s faculties of sight, hearing, communication and understanding are limited. The most trivial of things become a hindrance in their capacity. However, in the hereafter, these obstructions would be done away with. Whenever the dwellers of Paradise desire they would be able to converse with the dwellers of Hell.

In today’s era of scientific advancement, this depiction should not be the slightest amazing for human beings. By discovering very few law of nature, they have been able to make telescopes that can view the sun millions of miles away. They have invented the telephone in which two far off people can converse with one another. Television has made it possible for an orator thousands of miles apart to deliver a speech to his audience and hear them applaud him. They have invented instruments which can transmit the sound of the heart and the beat of a pulse to distant lands. In the presence of all these marvels, there is no reason to wonder how they will achieve such powers in the next world especially when the laws that confine them in this word will no longer be there when this earth and these heavens will be transformed into a new earth and heavens.

This question posed by the Paradise dwellers obviously cannot be understood as a reminder because its time would have passed. Its purpose would be to humiliate the dwellers of Hell. The latter’s confession would be the final nail in the coffin after which there will be no obstruction between them and their punishment. Thus the proclamation mentioned would signal its beginning.

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[21] And the dwellers of Paradise will call out and ask the dwellers of Hell: “We found the promise God made with us to be absolutely true; did you also find the promise your Lord made with you to be true?” They will reply: “Yes.” Then a caller will call out between them: “The curse of God be on unjust people.”

الَّذِيۡنَ يَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبۡغُوۡنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ كٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿٤٥﴾[22]

People have generally understood these words to be a part of the proclamation mentioned in the previous verse. However, in my opinion, they are an insertion from God. They are meant as an explanation so that this verse does merely become a narration of a future event. It has made it evident who disbelievers are and how the Quraysh are among them.

Such insertions are common in the Qur’ān. Several examples have been indicated in earlier *sūrahs* and many more will be found later. One example can be seen in verse 51 coming up. It is through these insertions that principles or anecdotes of the past and future are depicted as if they are happening in the present. For this reason, they must be specially paid attention to otherwise the sequence of the discourse might elude us and we may end up with a loaded interpretation. It would not only be against literary flair but also against linguistic principles. Thus those who have not regarded this verse to be an insertion, they had to go to great lengths to adjust the meaning of the last part: who disbelieve in the Hereafter. They have interpreted it in the sense: وَهُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ كَانُوۡا كٰفِرُوۡنَ (and they disbelieved in the hereafter) which is a form of an addition in the Qur’ān.

The يَصُدُّوۡنَ is used both transitively and intransitively. If there is no reason for preference, the transitive meaning should be adopted since it encompasses the latter meaning also.

The word عِوَج can refer to all sorts of divergences which people adopt after they depart from God’s way; however, if parallels from the Qur’ān are kept in consideration, this word alludes to creating deviations of polytheism from the straight path of monotheism.

وَبَيۡنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الۡاَعۡرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعۡرِفُوۡنَ كُلًّاۢ بِسِيۡمٰهُمۡ ۚ وَنَادَوۡا اَصۡحٰبَ الۡجَنَّةِ اَنۡ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ ۟ لَمۡ يَدۡخُلُوۡهَا وَ
هُمۡ يَطۡمَعُوۡنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاِذَا صُرِفَتۡ اَبۡصَارُهُمۡ تِلۡقَآءَ اَصۡحٰبِ النَّارِ ۙ قَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجۡعَلۡنَا مَعَ الۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَنَادٰۤى
اَصۡحٰبُ الۡاَعۡرَافِ رِجَالًا يَّعۡرِفُوۡنَهُمۡ بِسِيۡمٰهُمۡ قَالُوۡا مَاۤ اَغۡنٰى عَنۡكُمۡ جَمۡعُكُمۡ وَمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيۡنَ
اَقۡسَمۡتُمۡ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحۡمَةٍ ؕ اُدۡخُلُوا الۡجَنَّةَ لَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ تَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[23]

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[22] On those who stop [people] from the way of God, want to create divergence in it and disbelieve in the Hereafter.

[23] And there will be a curtain-wall between them and on the turrets of the wall there will be some people who will recognize each person through his sign. And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: “God’s peace and mercy be upon you,” – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders. And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: “Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.” And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: “What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you

PThe Qur’ān itself has made it clear in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd that the حِجَابٌ (curtain-wall) here refers to the wall between Paradise and Hell. Who can imagine the length of a wall that will be erected between the whole world of Paradise and the whole world of Hell when the Qur’ān has compared the extent of the world of Paradise with vastness of the heavens and the earth.

The word أَعرَاف is the plural of عُرُف. The latter word is used for the topmost part of a horse’s forehead and to the comb of a rooster. From here, this word began to be used for a turret or an observation post that is built on a high wall or mountain from where all sides are visible. It is evident from the style of the Qur’ān that these turrets and observation posts will be found on the wall erected between Paradise and Hell. From these places, both these worlds would be visible.

The word رِجَالٌ not only occurs in its common meaning (people), but those who are aware of the finer aspects of Arabic also know that the way it occurs here, it refers to prominent and distinguished personalities. For example in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Nūr, the words are: رِجَالٌ ۙ لَّا تُلۡهِيۡهِمۡ تِجَارَةٌ وَّ لَا بَيۡعٌ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ.[24] Similarly, in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, it is stated:مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوۡا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيۡهِ. [25] In verse 48, this very word is used for the leaders of disbelievers.

When the word كُلّ (all) occurs after a mention of people or groups the way it occurs here, it becomes a defined noun with regard to its meaning. In other words, it will refer only to those people or groups who have been mentioned earlier. Here the dwellers of Paradise and Hell are referred to and hence the word refers to them.

The word سيما means “sign”. Thus for example, in verse 29 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ, the words are: سِيۡمَاهُمۡ فِىۡ وُجُوۡهِهِمۡ مِّنۡ اَثَرِ السُّجُوۡدِ.[26] It is mentioned both in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth that on the Day of Judgement believers and disbelievers will be distinct from one another through the signs and effects of their deeds. Thus it is reported in a narrative that people asked the Prophet (sws) how he would recognize believers who would come after him. His reply was that if a person has horses in his herd whose head and feet have white hair, will he not recognize them. People replied in the affirmative. The Prophet (sws) then said that the people of his *ummah* will be recognized on the Day of Judgement by the signs of *wuḍū* – with which their foreheads, hand and feet will glisten.[27]

About the wife of Abū Lahab, the Qur’ān itself mentions that on the Day of

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would show. Are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” “Enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve.”

[24] In it, those people glorify Him morning and evening whom neither trade nor sale purchase divert from God’s remembrance.

[25] Among the believers are people who have fulfilled their promise with God.

[26] They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces.

[27] See: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 218, (no. 240).

Judgement, there will be a rope around her neck similar to the one used by slave-women to gather firewood. One can find similar indications in Ḥadīth narratives related to the ascension of the Prophet (sws). In short, it is evident that both believers and disbelievers will be distinct from their respective signs. It is because of these signs that the people standing on the turrets will recognize the righteous among the believers and miscreants among the disbelievers.

After this discussion, the important question that remains is about the identity of these people stationed in the turrets. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has cited four opinions in this regard:[28]

1. People who will have equal number of good and bad deeds. For this reason, the decision about their fate would have been deferred.
2. Religious scholars.
3. Those who participated in *jihād* without the permission of their parents.
4. Angels.

The last two of these have no basis. Not the slightest indication of these connotations exists in the Qur’ān.

The first of these though is the most famous, yet it is also very unlikely to be the correct connotation because of many reasons.

Firstly, the word رِجَالٌ is used for them. As indicated earlier, when used thus it refers to distinguished personalities. The question is that how can people whose good deeds could not even outnumber the bad ones be regarded so.

Secondly, it is not necessary that people whose good and bad deeds are equal be all men. They can also be women. Then why is a word (رِجَالٌ) that specifies men be used? Gender neutral words like *ṭā’ifah* and *ummah* could also have been used.

Thirdly, not a single word in the verse indicates that people whose decision has been deferred are referred nor is the purpose of making them view these sights evident even though occasion demands it.

Fourthly, the way in which these people standing in the turrets will speak to the people of Paradise and Hell must be taken into consideration. The content and style of their speech as well as the regard they are given shows that they cannot be those whose own salvation has been deferred and are such that their good and bad deeds are equal. It is evident from the Qur’ān that they will congratulate the People of Paradise and rebuke and scold those of Hell. How can people whose own fate is hanging in the balance say such words? Psychologically too it is not possible that such words come out from the mouths of those whose fate is uncertain and ethically too such words do not befit those whose own record of deeds is not very envious.

For these reasons, in spite of its wide acceptability, this opinion has no significance. The second of these interpretations is the one that is correct in my opinion. Al-Ṭabarī has ascribed it to Mujāhid (d. 105 AH) whose status as commentator is well known.

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[28] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, vol. 8, 190-194.

By referring to religious scholars, he obviously meant those were the proponents of the truth in the conflict between good and evil and those who enjoined the virtue and forbade vice. They would have been the ones who in their support of the truth bore hardships at the hands of the miscreants and defended the innocent. Such people undoubtedly would deserve the distinction that God make them observe Paradise and Hell from tall turrets so that they can witness the final fate of the believers and disbelievers from their very eyes and from their very tongues congratulate the former and rebuke the latter.

The words "And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: "God's peace and mercy be upon you" – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders, show that they will made to see these sights before they go to Paradise so that they witness the veracity of God's promise from their eyes and then enter it. The words "but would be contenders" express their humility. In spite of being bestowed all these favours, they would humble consider themselves to be hopeful of God's mercy and not certain of it. It should be kept in mind that those who know the attributes and practices of God do not place themselves beyond the status of being candidates of God's mercy. Only ingrates and the mean accord themselves such a position even if they have small number of pious deeds to boast about. In verse 82 of Sūrah al-Shu‘arā', Abraham (sws) says: وَالَّذِيْٓ اَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لِيْ خَطِيْٓـَٔتِيْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ.[29] At one instance, Muḥammad (sws) is reported to have said none will enter Paradise because of his own deeds. When people asked about his own self, he replied that he too will not be able to do so except if God's mercy envelops him.[30]

Consider the part "And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: 'Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.'" Its style signifies respect and honour for the people of the turrets. They will utter these words while being engrossed with the successes of the People of Paradise and dreading the fate of the dwellers of Hell. Just as the earlier words "they will be its candidates" portray their humility, the words of prayer also show their dread and as well as the horrific nature of Hell.

Consider next the words: "And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: 'What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you would show?'" It is evident that this address would be directed at the leaders of the dwellers of Hell because it was they who would boast about their large number and affluence in the previous world. In Hell, they will be distinct because of their signs and thus people like Abū Jahal and

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[29] "All these are my enemies except for God, Lord of the worlds, Who has created me; then it is He Who guides me. And Who makes me eat and drink and when I get sick, cures me, and He who shall give me death; then bring me back to life and from whom I have hope that on the Day of Judgement He shall forgive my sins."

[30] See: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 2169, (no. 2816).

Abū Lahab would be recognizable to the people on the turrets. The question posed by the people on the turrets obviously would not be to elicit any answer but to humiliate the dwellers of Paradise. The particle مَآ here in مَآ اَغۡنٰى عَنۡكُمۡ جَمۡعُكُمۡ my opinion is not for negation but for interrogation. This creates great emphasis and parallels from the Qur’ān reinforce this interpretation. Moreover, the next verse which is related to this is clearly interrogative in nature. If some other interpretation is adopted the discourse will lose its harmony.

The question in “are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” will be posed by the people on the turrets to the dwellers of Hell while referring to the dwellers of Paradise. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān that one of the arguments which the leaders of the Quraysh would bring against Islam was the poverty-stricken nature of its followers. They contended that how could God choose such people for this purpose. On the other hand, they themselves were blessed with affluence and thus were more eligible. It is in the background of this arrogance that the people on the turrets will pose this question to the dwellers of Hell. On the other hand, the words “enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve” will be addressed by them to the dwellers of Paradise. They would be meant to congratulate them. This will simultaneously also be a source of humiliation for the people of Hell.

Here, it is a possible that a question arise in the minds of some people that the dwellers of Paradise will already be in Paradise. So what is the meaning of saying ““enter Paradise” to them? It is perhaps to avoid this question that interpreters of the Qur’ān went to unrealistic lengths to ascertain its addresser and addressee. In my opinion, this happened because they did not keep in mind a particular style of Arabic. At times, a verb also connotes firm placement and location. Thus the verb “enter” is used in this very meaning in verse 99 of Sūrah Yūsuf:

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوۡا عَلٰى يُوۡسُفَ اٰوٰۤى اِلَيۡهِ اَبَوَيۡهِ وَقَالَ ادۡخُلُوۡا مِصۡرَ اِنۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيۡنَ (١٢ : ٩٩)

Then when they came over to Joseph, he gave his parents a place especially near him and said: “Enter in Egypt, if God wills, with peace. ” (12:99)

The above cited verses refer to the time when at the behest of Joseph (sws), his brothers had come over to his court with their parents and were treated honourably. Obviously, they had already entered Egypt and were in his presence. Here the words “enter Egypt” thus mean “stay and take residence in Egypt.” It is precisely in this meaning that the word “enter” has been used in the verse under discussion too. The people on the turrets would ask the dwellers of Paradise to comfortably stay in Paradise. Such will be the honour of those who were regarded as poor and poverty-stricken in the previous world. They will have nothing to fear or grieve.

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ اَفِيْضُوْا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَآءِ اَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۙ﴿۵۰﴾[31]

The forbiddance mentioned in حَرَّمَهُمَا does not relate to any *sharī‘ah*-related prohibition. It relates to general forbiddance, as in verse 26 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah (thus this land was prohibited to them for forty years). In other words, God deprived them of entering that land at any cost for forty years. It is obvious that when God deprives someone of something in such an emphatic way, how can he be ever its recipient? It is evident from the answer of the dwellers of Paradise that they have no problem in fulfilling the demand of the dwellers of Paradise but it is God Who has decided to deprive them of its fulfilment and hence now they too cannot be of any help.

الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَّلَعِبًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوْا لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا ۙ وَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾[32]

This verse is a *taḍmīn* (insertion) from God. He has explained the answer of the dwellers of Paradise as to why the dwellers of Hell will be deprived of the fulfilment of their demand. Through this insertion the discourse relates to the situation of those times. In other words, the Quraysh should not think that what is being narrated to them does not concern them. It does. A similar example has occurred earlier in verse 45.

This verse speaks of how those people made fun of the religion revealed to them. Everything has its time and occasion. Religions are revealed to explain the correct path in every aspect of life so that people tread this path and not end up falling in a pit. However, those who regard this world to be a place of amusement become blind in their desires to such an extent that they regard the most serious of facts which is against their desires to be a joke and try to make fun of it.

The words “were deceived by the life of the world” depict the reason why these people turned a blind eye to the serious facts of life. When they saw that they were living with such relish and comfort and there was none to question them, they thought that the world has been created for just this end. If someone tried to tell them that after this world a day of accountability would arrive, they regarded him to be a lunatic who was trying to take away their freedom from them.

The expression “We shall forget them” means that God will ignore them. In other words, the verb “forget” signifies its consequence. Otherwise God never forgets anything.

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31. And the dwellers of Hell will call out to the companions of Paradise: “Give us water or grant us some of what God has blessed you with.” They will reply: “God has forbidden both these things to the disbelievers. ”

32. – For those who made their religion an entertainment and amusement and who were deceived by the life of the world. Thus, today We shall forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting and the way they used to deny Our revelations.

Consider the expression لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا. It is evident from parallels in the Qur’ān that the verb لِقَآءَ at times is annexed to its object and at times to its locus. However, the meaning in both cases is the same: meeting the Lord in the hereafter. “They forgot this day of their meeting” means “they forget meeting their Lord on this day.”

The sentence وَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ is coordinated to the previous one. Hence the sense is: كَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ. The word كَمَا besides connoting example also connotes causation. Thus if it is translated as “and because they continued to deny Our revelations” then this would be very precise.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ (٥٢) هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا تَاْوِيْلَهٗ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ نَسُوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ شُفَعَآءَ فَيَشْفَعُوْا لَنَآ اَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ (٥٣)[33]

The pronoun “them” in “and We have delivered to them a Book ” refers to the Quraysh. The first verse mentions God great favour to them by revealing the Qur’ān to them. The attribute of the Book stated is that God in the light of certain knowledge has explained all those matters whose comprehension was necessary for success in this world and the next. This explanation also refers to the details mentioned earlier about the companions of Paradise and Hell and the people on the turrets. Though they belong to the next world, none should consider them to be fictitious. The word عِلْمٍ in عَلٰى عِلْمٍ is undefined for magnification (*tafkhīm*). In other words this is based on the grand and supreme knowledge of God; all that is said is certain. God knows what will happen on the Day of Judgement the way He knows what will happen today and tomorrow. Thus if someone makes fun of them by regarding this information to be baseless, he should keep in mind that the day is not far off when he will see each of these things with his very eyes and call out that whatever God and His messenger informed him of was correct.

The words “guidance” and “mercy” in “as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe” are used with respect to the beginning and the hereafter and for this world and the next. In other words, this book is guidance in this world for people and the consequence of accepting this guidance is mercy in the hereafter.

The verb يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ in هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ connotes intention ie. those who want to believe.

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33. – And We have delivered to them a Book which We have explained on the basis of certain knowledge, as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe. These people only wait to see its reality? The day its reality comes forth, people who had ignored it earlier will say: “Indeed, the messengers of our Lord had brought the absolute truth. Then are there any intercessors who may intercede in our favour or is there a possibility that we may be returned so that we do different to what we have being doing?” They inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished.

The implication of the word تَأْوِيْل is that whatever things the Qur’ān is informing people about are the absolute truth. However, since they have not materialized in the form of events and are hidden in the veil of the future, the disbelievers think that they are only threats. They await their manifestation to believe in them.

Consider the words: “they inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished.” The real value of life is that virtues be earned in this world, as is evident from Sūrah al-‘Aṣr. If a person failed to do this, his life will become a curse for him and he will be doomed. “Fabrication” here refers to their concocted deities. They turned out to be a farce and something they fabricated of their own and ascribed them to God.

Section V: Verses (54-58)

The earlier section concluded on the baseless nature of polytheism and how it will lead people to an evil fate. In the coming verses, this topic is brought to a completion by explaining various aspects and implications of monotheism. It is stated that God created the heavens and the earth and after making this universe did not become aloof. He is governing it ever since. The night and the day, the sun and the moon, planets and stars, all are subservient to Him and moving in their prescribed paths. It is the creator whose orders are implemented in this universe. Who other than the creator can have the right to run its affairs? Then this universe from its very existence bears witness that its creator is very benevolent and blessed. So, people should call Him alone, whether in public or in private and pin all hopes on Him, whether in hope or in despair. They must not associate partners with Him. If they do so, this is tantamount to being rebellious against God and spreading anarchy in the land. God never likes those who are disobedient to Him and spreading disorder in the land.

After this, a parable of rain is presented. Three facts are simultaneously evident from this.

Firstly, God’s mercy is very close to His pious people. Thus both in hope and in despair, only He should be turned to. People must not seek other supports considering that His mercy is not accessible to them. It is He Who sends rain after the land gets dry and people lose hope and then drenches the earth.

Secondly, just as it is seen that as soon as dry land receives a brief burst of rain it becomes revived, in a similar way, God will re-create human beings after they die and decompose.

Thirdly, rain has different affects on different lands depending upon their potential; some places become lush and luxuriant; barren land produces thorny bushes. On a similar basis, the rain of mercy and guidance of the Qur’ān has different affects. Those who preserved their natures from getting distorted will obtain any benefit from it and their hearts will light up with the radiance of faith. However, this rain will only produce scrubs and weeds of disbelief and malice in those who do not have the slightest potential.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ فِىۡ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰى عَلَى الۡعَرۡشِ قف يُغۡشِى الَّيۡلَ النَّهَارَ يَطۡلُبُهٗ
حَثِيۡثًا ۙ وَّالشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوۡمَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍۭ بِاَمۡرِهٖ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الۡخَلۡقُ وَالۡاَمۡرُ ؕ تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اُدۡعُوۡا رَبَّكُمۡ
تَضَرُّعًا وَّ خُفۡيَةً ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الۡمُعۡتَدِيۡنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ ۚ وَلَا تُفۡسِدُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ بَعۡدَ اِصۡلَاحِهَا وَادۡعُوۡهُ خَوۡفًا وَّطَمَعًا ؕ اِنَّ رَحۡمَتَ
اللّٰهِ قَرِيۡبٌ مِّنَ الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ يُرۡسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشۡرًاۢ بَيۡنَ يَدَىۡ رَحۡمَتِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَاۤ اَقَلَّتۡ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقۡنٰهُ
لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَنۡزَلۡنَا بِهِ الۡمَآءَ فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا بِهٖ مِنۡ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُخۡرِجُ الۡمَوۡتٰى لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالۡبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ
يَخۡرُجُ نَبَاتُهٗ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهٖ ۚ وَالَّذِىۡ خَبُثَ لَا يَخۡرُجُ اِلَّا نَكِدًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ يَّشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Indeed, your Lord is the God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He ascended the throne. He covers the day with the night which comes running after it. And He created the sun, the moon and the stars which are subservient to His orders. Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs. Very blessed is God, Lord of the worlds. Invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private. Indeed, He does not like those who cross limits. And do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right and call Him alone in both fear and of hope. Indeed, God’s mercy is close to those who are thorough. (54-56)

And it is He Who before sending rains of mercy drives forth winds as glad tidings. Until when they lift clouds laden with water, We propel it to a barren piece of land and send down rain there; then bring into existence from it fruits of all kinds. In this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded. And fertile land produces much at its Lord’s directive; but defective land produces much less. We show Our signs in this manner in a variety of ways for those who want to be grateful. (57-58)

Explanation

اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ فِىۡ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰى عَلَى الۡعَرۡشِ قف يُغۡشِى الَّيۡلَ النَّهَارَ يَطۡلُبُهٗ حَثِيۡثًا ۙ وَّ
الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوۡمَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍۭ بِاَمۡرِهٖ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الۡخَلۡقُ وَالۡاَمۡرُ ؕ تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿٥٤﴾[34]

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[34] Indeed, your Lord is the God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He ascended the throne. He covers the day with the night which comes running after it. And He created the sun, the moon and the stars which are subservient to His orders. Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs. Very blessed is God, Lord of the worlds.

The Arabs believed that the heavens and the earth and all other things have been created by God. However, they had set up other deities with Him. They believed that after creating this world, God had consigned the governance of its various spheres to His workers. Now, it was these workers who hold the final authority in their respective spheres. Hence, they must be worshipped as only they are the sole means of procuring God's nearness. It is these workers who grant sustenance, wealth and children. If people do not earn their pleasure, merely relying on God would not be sufficient. They accorded these workers the status of deities and intercessors. Though ideologically they believed that God was the creator and the supreme deity, practically all their association was not with Him but with His deputies. In this verse, the Almighty has chided them by saying that the creator of the heavens and the earth is precisely their Lord. When they do not believe anyone else to be so, why have they set up His partners?

The days referred to in the verse are not the twenty four hour days. They refer to the days of God. The schemes and projects of God manifest according to the count of His days. The Qur'ān has specified that these days can be equal to a thousand earth years (32:5) as well as fifty thousand earth years (70:4). For this reason, six days mean six phases. The Torah and the Qur'ān both mention the world being created in six phases. Modern philosophy also reinforces its gradual creation. Hence, in this matter there is no dispute between ancient and modern views. However, the way advocates present the theory of evolution there are many gaps in it. They cannot be filled until the logical and natural principles put forth by the Qur'ān about this theory are accepted. They will inshaAllah be explained at an appropriate place.

The Almighty could have created this universe in an instant through His command of "Be" instead of creating in six days or six phases. This was not beyond His power. However, His wisdom entailed that it be created in six phases. Just as God has made evident His majesty of power at all instances, He has also made evident the majesty of His wisdom, providence and mercy. Their manifestation is as important for the completion of intellectual and spiritual aspects of a person as is that of the completion of power of God. It has been explained in Sūrah al-An‘ām that it was not beyond the power of God that He send down bread directly from the heavens. Then why do winds blow, clouds gather, rains descend, land is tilled, seeds are sown, spikes sprout, crops grow luxuriantly, then seeds appear in them, then warm winds blow to warm these seeds. Then after almost six months of warm and cold phases a seed of wheat reaches a farmer's storehouse. All this is because in this way each and every particle and object of this universe has become a treasure of the signs of God's creativity and governance and of His marvels of power and wisdom. Wherever a person looks, he becomes cognizant of God's person if his mind and eyes are alert. A single object changes form and shape in so many ways in order to attract our attention and we are able to see in them the signs of God and learn a lesson from them. The state which the smallest particle of this universe is in is the same as that of the universe taken collectively. It too has not been created suddenly as an accident. On the contrary, its creator has gradually brought it to completion with great wisdom by making it pass through various phases until finally it was accorded all the features necessary for human life to thrive. This gradual process shows that its creation could not have been an accidental happening or an act of amusement. It, on the other hand, shows that it has a purpose to it, which will one day necessarily manifest itself. I will discuss this point in detail under verse 7 of Sūrah Hūd.

The words “then He ascended the throne” express the consequence of this majestic creation of the universe in gradual stages. How is it possible that God becomes unconcerned about its governance after creating it? The obvious consequence of creating it is that He govern it. To delineate this fact, at some instances, an expression like يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ (He devises matter) is used with اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (He ascended the throne). It would be a very foolish allegation on God to say that He creates but does not govern what He has created. If a king conquers a land with great might and then becomes aloof and does not run its affairs like administering justice and maintaining peace and miscreants continue to create disorder in it, everyone will call him incompetent. When this is so for an ordinary king of this world, how can it be true for the master and creator of the heavens and the earth? This is a negation of the self-styled notion of the Idolaters that God did create the heavens and the earth but after their creation, He has consigned its administration to His associates and does not have anything to do with it. At the same time, this is a also a refutation of those shallow philosophers who regard God to be the first cause: He was the cause of creation but once He created, He did not have any concern of its consequences or of who should control it.

The word الْعَرْشِ (the throne) signifies political authority. When عَلَى is used after اسْتَوٰى, it means to sit and take charge.’

Consider the sentence يُغْشِى الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهٗ حَثِيْثًا. The word حَثِيْث means “fervour.” This is an explanation of the governance and planning encompassed in taking charge of the throne. The implication is that the movement going on the system of this universe is because of this governance and planning of the creator. All heavenly bodies are subservient to His commands as is the passage of night and day. All these elements follow a fixed pattern and path and there is not the slightest deviation in it. Not for a second can this happen.

The sentence “Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs” states that this actually is the case and is also an expression of the truth: everything is following the command of God with full fervour and efficiency and this is also befitting for them to do. The reason is that Who else can give commands than the one who creates?

It may be kept in mind that the word حَثِيْثًا shows that everything is carrying out its orders with great zeal. There is not the slightest hesitancy anywhere. In other words, it is only worthy of a human being to worship and obey God Who has created him.

A thing worth noting here is that the zeal and fervour of the night is mentioned but the zeal of the day is not mentioned, whereas we see this mention at other instances, as in وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْ اَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا.[35] The reason for this is that here sun has been mentioned after the night.

Consider the sentence: تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. The form *tafā‘ul* has extreme exaggeration in it. For this reason, the expression تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ would means “very blessed and merciful is God.” Earlier, evident from the various grand manifestations of God’s creation and governance is not only His power and exaltedness but also His providence, mercy and benevolence.

This is meant to dispel the misconception that has often misled idolatrous nations because they increased the extent of God’s loftiness and power so much that His mercy and blessings were sidelined as a result. The result of this misconception was that it was thought that it was impossible for human beings to access God and get in touch with Him. Therefore means were searched for that could become the source of presenting one’s needs before God. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah that this erroneous concept about the attributes of God is a major factor in the creed of polytheism. The idolaters began worshipping many hypothetical deities, in particular the angels, thinking that they were favoured daughters of God. If they were pleased with them, then they would also be instrumental in making their father pleased with them and all the world would become merciful to them. By the using the words “very blessed and merciful is God, Lord of the worlds” the Qur’ān has directed our attention to the fact that when just as this universe bears witness to the power and exaltedness of God, it also bears evidence of His unfathomable mercy and benevolence, there is no need to find a means or some mediation to ask from Him. Whether in hope or in despair, only He should be beseeched and called upon. Just as He is peerless in His splendour, He is also peerless in His mercy.

اُدْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ؕ اِنَّ
رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾[36]

The word تَضَرُّع is from ضراعت and means “humility” and “coaxing.” This can be through actions and through words as well. Its most effective form is one in which there is harmony between both words and actions. The best form of this is the prayer ritual. To stand respectfully after ablution, tie one’s hands and bend one’s head, kneel, place one’s nose and forehead on the ground are all expressions and gestures of humility. The various words of supplications and glorification that are uttered with these postures are metaphorical expression of this humility.

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[35] And it is He Who made the night and day follow one another for those who want to be reminded or be grateful.

[36] Invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private. Indeed, He does not like those who cross limits. And do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right and call Him alone in both fear and of hope. Indeed, God’s mercy is close to those who are thorough.

The word خُفْيَةً means "secretly." It is a mannerism of humility which also ensures the elements of sincerity and faithfulness in it. What is done secretly remains secure from the trial of show off. Moreover, since the Almighty knows and hears everything, there is no need to shout in order supplicate before Him. Here it must be kept in mind that "secretly" here is meant to close doors to pomposity and ill-mannered conduct. This does not negate the loud tone a person may sometimes adopt in his individual supplications or collective ones in a congregation. In other words, it lays emphasis on moderation. This topic will *insha'Allāh* be explained further in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl under verse 110.

Let us now turn to the explanation of the verse after studying some of its words. Earlier, it has been explained that only God is the creator of the heavens and the earth. It is at His behest that the starts and heavenly bodies are moving in their respective orbits. It is He alone Who has created everything and He alone Who governs His creation. He is very benevolent and blessed. Now in this verse, the obligation God's creatures owe to Him is stated: they must beseech and invoke Him only in secret. In other words, a show of arrogance and haughtiness from people is not appropriate at all. Every object of this universe is in submission to God and is fervently carrying out His orders. If this is the case, then what right does a human being have to show this arrogance? God does not like those who cross limits. The system of this universe shows that God does not let anything exceed its limits. Also, world history too bears witness that He did not give the arrogant respite beyond a certain limit.

The words "and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right" emphasize in a negative manner what has been just stated. It has been explained in the Qur'ān through various aspects that if there had been other deities in the heavens and the earth besides God, the whole world would have been disrupted. The only reason this world is intact is that only the single intent of God prevails in it. This monotheism in the ordained sphere entails that human beings too should worship and obey the one and only God in their own circle of authority and not associate anyone in this worship and obedience. If they do so, all the system of justice and order of this world will be disrupted. Just as in order to let this universe remain intact and thrive, it is essential that only the directive of God prevail in its ordained sphere, similarly to maintain peace in this world, human beings must obey Him alone. To regard someone other in God's kingdom to be worthy of worship is to create anarchy and rebellion in it. There is no greater a crime than this. The words "and do not spread disorder in the land" are qualified by the expression "after it has been set right." This is to express the heinous nature of the undertaking. In other words, spreading disorder in the land is a grave crime but it becomes graver if this is done after its affairs have been set right. This is because this does mean to disrupt something already in a disrupted state; it means that what is orderly and right has been disrupted.

It may be kept in mind that when God created this world, He did not leave it in a state of fear and disorder. Before sending Adam (sws) in this world, He actually took a promise from him to worship and obey Him only. This incident is mentioned later in this *sūrah* in verses 172-173. Then as mentioned earlier in verses 35-36, God promised the progeny of Adam (sws) that He will send messengers to guide them; those who follow them will succeed and those who arrogantly evade them will be destroyed. Then in accordance with this promise, He continued to send messengers. Its details are stated in verses 59-92 ahead. In the anecdotes of these messengers, as will become evident from verses 69, 74, 85, 100 and 102, whenever the progeny Adam (sws) spread disorder in the land by deviating from the path of monotheism, they were warned by God through His messengers. When they evaded these warnings they were uprooted from the land by God and were replaced by others to see how they fulfil their obligation towards their position of authority. In this way, this world has been repeatedly inflicted with disorder by Satan and his progeny and also repeatedly reformed by messengers and reformers. Viewed thus, whenever a nation has received the reins of authority, it was by setting right disorder in the land and if the new nation after being entrusted with these reins also created disorder, it did not further disrupt an already disrupted thing; it disrupted what had been set right. This makes its crime to be graver.

As far as the messengers are concerned, this afore-mentioned principle is absolutely relentless. Through them, the truth shines like the sun. For this reason, the system which is destroyed by them is evil and the system that is established by them is the truth. Muḥammad (sws) was the last of the messengers but it does not mean that after him the principle of rise and fall of nations has changed. Even today, if a nation is destroyed, it is not because of some chance and if a nation rises, then this too is not a chance happening. Actually moral principles govern this rise and fall. However, the inception of a nation because of a few moral factors that give life to it is something different from the existence of a system of truth. If a nation is at its zenith, it does show that it has more moral elements that give it life than a vanquished nation. However, this is not evidence enough to assume that this nation and its system are entirely the truth. Many of our reformers have found it very difficult to understand this principle, as a result of which they have gone to extremes in its regard. People who are inflicted with national bias always think that the dominance of a victorious nation is because of its deceptive measures and connivances. Because of their own bias they are neither able to see the moral superiority of the dominant nation nor can they see the moral weakness with which they themselves are afflicted. Similarly, people who have the mentality of being over-awed think that every dominant nation's dominance is proof enough of it being on the truth. As such, whatever disorder is created by the dominant nation is regarded by them to be order and is praised by them. The consequence of these extreme currents is that histories of nations were compiled in a totally wrong way. As a result, deriving correct results out of it and benefitting from it for collective reformation became impossible. I will elaborate more on this issue in the explanation of Sūrah al-Rūm *insha’Allāh.*

The sentence “and call Him alone in both fear and of hope” occurs in parallel to “invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private.” The latter depicts the way in which God should be invoked which was opposite to arrogance and the former actually states the motive to invoke God which actually obliterates every speck of polytheism. Arrogance makes a person indifferent to God. If it is controlled, a person becomes content and humble and this links him to God. There are two aspects of this contentment: fear and hope. The instincts of human beings are also divided into these two aspects. If factors external to them are evaluated, it becomes evident that they too materialize under fear or hope. We desire many things in their literal and allegorical sense and want to stay away, ignore and repel many such things too. In both these states, the Qur’ān says that it is the requirement of monotheism that human beings only seek and invoke God. They should turn to Him regarding whatever they desire and seek His refuge only from things they fear and want to stay way from. The reason is that He alone gives or otherwise. Without Him, none can receive anything good nor remain secure from anything evil. Moreover, He alone is the true standard of good and evil. If only He is turned to in both hope and fear, it is not difficult for a person to determine what he should desire and what he should abstain from and how. It should be kept in mind that hope and fear can both prove to be dangerous pitfalls. Satan ambushes people through both and thereby entangles them either in open or in hidden polytheism.

The words “indeed, God’s mercy is close to those who are thorough” refer to people who regard God to be their real Lord and protector in both hope and fear. If a person is not fully devoted to God in both these states, then he cannot be regarded as thorough and will be far away from God’s mercy. Here a linguistic aspect must be kept in consideration: since the feminine gender of رَحۡمَت is unreal, it is not essential to use a feminine pronoun while referring to it. Moreover, the *fa‘īl* form in some situations is equal for the masculine as well as the feminine gender.

وَ هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُرۡسِلُ الرِّیٰحَ بُشۡرًۢا بَیۡنَ یَدَیۡ رَحۡمَتِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَاۤ اَقَلَّتۡ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقۡنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّیِّتٍ فَاَنۡزَلۡنَا بِهِ الۡمَآءَ
فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا بِهٖ مِنۡ کُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ کَذٰلِکَ نُخۡرِجُ الۡمَوۡتٰی لَعَلَّکُمۡ تَذَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَ الۡبَلَدُ الطَّیِّبُ یَخۡرُجُ نَبَاتُهٗ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهٖ ۚ وَ الَّذِیۡ
خَبُثَ لَا یَخۡرُجُ اِلَّا نَکِدًا ؕ کَذٰلِکَ نُصَرِّفُ الۡاٰیٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ یَّشۡکُرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[37]

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[37] And it is He Who before sending rains of mercy drives forth winds as glad tidings. Until when they lift clouds laden with water, We propel it to a barren piece of land and send down rain there; then bring into existence from it fruits of all kinds. In this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded. And fertile land produces much at its Lord’s directive; but defective land produces much less. We show Our signs in this manner in a variety of ways

The word رَحۡمَتَ connotes rain here. The Qur’ān has used this word for rain on more than one occasion. These verses depict a parable to show that only God should be turned to in both states of hope and fear. This is because only He is the source of mercy. Not a single drop of rain, on which depends life of this whole world, can come down except at God’s behest. He first brings forth monsoon winds which lift water-laden clouds and then drives them to barren lands. In verse 28 of Sūrah Shūrā, the words are: وَهُوَ الَّذِيۡ يُنَزِّلُ الۡغَيۡثَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا قَنَطُوۡا وَيَنۡشُرُ رَحۡمَتَهٗ.[38]

The word اقلال means to lift something as if it has no weight. سحاب is the plural of سحابة. However, it is singular in form and shape. For this reason, a singular pronoun is used for it in: سُقۡنٰهُ. The ب in فَاَنۡزَلۡنَا بِهِ signifies locus. The verses direct our attention to His power and mercy and as a consequence to ask from Him alone in hope and fear. None else controls the universe.

The sentence “in this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded” directs our attention to another fact that can be drawn from this parable: just as God through rain brings to life a dead stretch of land in a similar way He will bring all the dead back to life. How can this be beyond Him if He has powers people witness.? The purpose of all these signs is to remind people of the hereafter. The words “so that you are reminded” are the consequence of focusing attention to these signs signified by كَذٰلِكَ.

Just as the words خبيث and طيب occur in the moral sense, they also occur in the material sense. Here occasion evidences that the expression الۡبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ means fertile land and وَالَّذِيۡ خَبُثَ refers to barren land. The words at the end are: لَا يَخۡرُجُ اِلَّا نَكِدًا. In the previous part of the sentence, the word parallel to نَكِدًا is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. It means “defective” and “little in number.” For this reason, the meaning of “lush” and “more in number” is suppressed in the first part of the sentence.

A third reality is also pointed to through this parable of rain. God’s merciful rain falls on all types of surfaces; however, its benefit is dependent on the potential found in the surface. Fertile land becomes lush through it but barren land either remains lifeless or produces wasteful shrubs. In a similar way, the mercy that is pouring down on the land in the form of the Qur’ān is not beneficial to all people. Only those who have the potential benefit from it. Thus, those whose natural abilities are intact, will become blossom like an orchard. However, those who waste them, one can only expect the thorns and shrubs of malice and enmity grow from them. This lesson is also found in a narrative of the Prophet (sws). It is reported that he said that he has been sent with knowledge and guidance. Its parable is that when there is rain, fertile land absorbs water and becomes lush. Similarly, there may be a piece of land which stores

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for those who want to be grateful.

[38] And He it is’ Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy.

water. So God makes people benefit a lot from it. People drink from it, water their crops and sow seeds. Similarly, there may be a barren piece of land. It neither absorbs water nor produces vegetation. This is a parable of people who acquire an understanding of religion and benefit from it from what I have been sent with from God. Thus they should learn and teach. This is also a parable of those who do not direct their attention to it and evade seeking guidance from it. (Bukhārī / Muslim).

Readers can thus see how many facts are revealed by just this single parable of rain: it lays credence to the belief of monotheism; a parallel is also furnished of the possibility of the Hereafter and the manifestation of the Day of Judgement; similarly, the practice of God about providing guidance also becomes evident. In other words, all the topics that were raised in this *sūrah* from its beginning until here are, in principle, alluded to. .. this universe has been made by the Almighty in such a way that if a person has a keen eye, then every object in it bears witness to the facts the Qur’ān is calling them to profess faith in. Alas! Where do we find insightful eyes and ears!

The word تصریف in كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ means “to cause to circulate.” This word is used in the Qur’ān for winds. It is used here for its verses. Just as through the circulation of winds various manifestations of God’s power and wisdom, mercy and retribution come into being, in a similar way, through the Qur’ān the Almighty makes evident His signs in diverse ways so that people understand, recognize and value them. The words “for those who want to be grateful” point to the fact that the phenomenon of explaining facts through diverse and multiple verses is a great favour of God provided there are people who value it. The essence of gratitude is to duly value favours and blessings. It is on this acknowledgement that the benefit of each blessing is based. If this is not present, then presenting facts in diverse ways will not have any affect on the listeners.

Section VI: Verses (59-93)

In this section, the topic of warning the Quraysh of the hereafter that was continuing from the previous verses is reinforced through historical evidence. The account of every single nation that inhabited Arabia in the past is taken up and it is shown how they were given political authority by God. However, the consequence of this was that each of them showed ingratitude, spread anarchy in the land and disrupted the system of justice. Ultimately, God sent His messenger to each of them who invited them to adhere to justice and fair play. However, because of their arrogance, not only did they did not accept this invitation, they went after the life of their messenger. The result was that after being given respite to a certain extent, they were destroyed. The purpose of narrating these anecdotes to the Quraysh is that they too are facing the same situation and their fate is about to be decided by God’s court of justice the way it was decided for other nations. There is no reason that if they too adopt the same behaviour these nations adopted, the decision of this unbiased court of justice would be any different. The law of God is the same for all. When God sends a messenger to a nation, it is faced with either of the two options: to accept reformation or be put to death. There is no other way left for them.

It is evident that the accounts of nations that are mentioned in this section were well known to the Arabs. However, this knowledge was based on ambiguous and hazy traditions. Their moral aspect, in particular, was totally ambiguous. The Qur’ān has lifted the veil from this ambiguity and revived their history. It has asked the Quraysh to intently listen to these accounts and learn a lesson from them. They are not merely anecdotes of others; rather their own anecdote.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ۝٥٩
قَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِهٖۤ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝٦٠ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّ لٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٦١
اُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَ اَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٦٢ اَوَ عَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ
لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَ لِتَتَّقُوْا وَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ۝٦٣ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَ اَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ
اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ ۝٦٤ وَ اِلٰى عَادٍ اَخَاهُمْ هُوْدًا ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ۝٦٥ قَالَ
الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖۤ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ سَفَاهَةٍ وَّ اِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝٦٦ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ سَفَاهَةٌ وَّ لٰكِنِّيْ
رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٦٧ اُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَ اَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ اَمِيْنٌ ۝٦٨ اَوَ عَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى
رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ ؕ وَ اذْكُرُوْۤا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّ زَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصْۜطَةً ۚ فَاذْكُرُوْۤا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝٦٩ قَالُوْۤا اَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَحْدَهٗ وَ نَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَاۤ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝٧٠
قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَّ غَضَبٌ ؕ اَتُجَادِلُوْنَنِيْ فِيْۤ اَسْمَآءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَاۤ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ
سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ فَانْتَظِرُوْۤا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ۝٧١ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَ قَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ مَا كَانُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝٧٢ وَ اِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا ۘ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ
بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْۤ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَ لَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝٧٣ وَ
اذْكُرُوْۤا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَّ بَوَّاَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْ سُهُوْلِهَا قُصُوْرًا وَّ تَنْحِتُوْنَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوْتًا ۚ

فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِیْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لِلَّذِیْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِمَنْ
اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ اَتَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّ صٰلِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلَ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾ قَالَ الَّذِیْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا بِالَّذِیْٓ
اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾ فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوْا یٰصٰلِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِیْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾
فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِیْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِیْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ یٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّیْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَ
لٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ النّٰصِحِیْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾ وَلُوْطًا اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اَتَاْتُوْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ اَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ اِنَّكُمْ
لَتَاْتُوْنَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ النِّسَآءِ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ
قَرْیَتِكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ اُنَاسٌ یَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ فَاَنْجَیْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۖؗ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِیْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَیْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ؕ
فَانْظُرْ كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِیْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ وَاِلٰى مَدْیَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَیْبًا ؕ قَالَ یٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَیْرُهٗ ؕ قَدْ
جَآءَتْكُمْ بَیِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَوْفُوا الْكَیْلَ وَالْمِیْزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْیَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا ؕ
ذٰلِكُمْ خَیْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ وَلَا تَقْعُدُوْا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوْعِدُوْنَ وَتَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَ
تَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِیْلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۪ وَانْظُرُوْا كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِیْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ وَاِنْ كَانَ طَآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ
اٰمَنُوْا بِالَّذِیْٓ اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖ وَطَآىِٕفَةٌ لَّمْ یُؤْمِنُوْا فَاصْبِرُوْا حَتّٰى یَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ بَیْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَیْرُ الْحٰكِمِیْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ
اسْتَكْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ یٰشُعَیْبُ وَالَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْیَتِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِیْ مِلَّتِنَا ؕ قَالَ اَوَلَوْ كُنَّا
كٰرِهِیْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ قَدِ افْتَرَیْنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِیْ مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ؕ وَمَا یَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ فِیْهَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ
یَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَیْنَنَا وَبَیْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ خَیْرُ
الْفٰتِحِیْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَىِٕنِ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَیْبًا اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِیْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِیْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ الَّذِیْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَیْبًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ یَغْنَوْا فِیْهَا ۛۚ اَلَّذِیْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَیْبًا كَانُوْا هُمُ الْخٰسِرِیْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾
فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ یٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّیْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ ۚ فَكَیْفَ اٰسٰى عَلٰى قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِیْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾

We sent forth Noah as a messenger to his people. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.” The elders of his nation replied: “We see you in manifest error. ” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not in any error. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the whole universe. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and being your well-wisher and know from God which you do not know. Did you find it strange that you received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may inform you and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you?” Then these people rejected him. So, We saved him and those who were with him on the ship and drowned those who denied Our revelations. Indeed, these people were blind. (59-64)

And to ‘Ād, We sent their brother Hūd. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. Then do you not have fear ?” The elders of his nation, who had taken to disbelief, replied: “We see you inflicted with foolishness and We regard you to be among the liars.” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not inflicted with any foolishness. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the worlds. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and am a sincere well-wisher of yours. Did you find it strange that you have received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may warn you? And recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah and made you strong and mighty in physique. So, keep in mind the majesties of God so that you may succeed.” They replied: “Have you come to us so that we worship only one God and leave aside those who our forefathers have been worshipping? So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful. ” He said: “Filth and wrath will come upon you from your Lord. Are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction? So wait; I shall also be among those who wait.” Thus, We saved him and his companions through Our grace and severed the roots of those who denied Our revelations and they were not prepared to believe. (65-72)

And to the Thamūd, We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you. And recall when God made you succeed the nation of ‘Ād and granted you authority in the land: you make forts in its lands and carve houses from mountains. So, remember the majesties of God and do not spread disorder in the land.” The arrogant elders of his nation said to the subservient among them who had accepted faith: “Do you think that Ṣāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” They replied: “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent.” The arrogant said: “We disbelieve in what you have believed.” Then they hamstrung the she-camel and disobeyed the directive of their Lord and said: “Ṣāliḥ! If you have been sent by God, bring on us the torment you are threatening us with.” Thus a shudder overtook them and they were left lying face down in their homes. So, Ṣāliḥ walked off from them, saying: “O People of My Nation! I have delivered to you the message of My Lord and have been your well-wisher. But you do not like well-wishers.” (73-79)

And We sent Lot when he said to his nation: “Do you commit open vulgarity? No nation before you has perpetrated it. You fulfil your sexual desires through men leaving aside women? You are absolutely senseless; in fact people who have crossed the limits.” At this, his nation merely replied: “Expel these people from your settlement ; they pose to be very pious. ” So, We saved him and his family except his wife who was among those who were left behind. And We ravaged them by a shower of stones. Then observe the fate met by these wrongdoers. (80-84)

And to Madyan We sent their brother, Shu‘ayb. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear proof has come to you from your Lord. Thus weigh and measure full. Do not decrease the things of people in any way and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right. This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith. And do not sit on every path intimidating people, stopping the believers from the path of God and distorting it. Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers. And whereas one group from among you has professed faith in what I have been sent with and another did not; so, wait until God passes His judgement between us and He is the best of judges.” And the elders of his nation who had turned arrogant said: “O Shu‘ayb ! We shall turn out from our settlement you and those who have professed faith with you or you must return to our ways.” He said: “Even in the case when we hate it? We would be regarded as those who have imputed falsehood to God if we return to your ways after God has delivered us. This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends. And the fact is that the knowledge of our Lord embraces everything. We have trusted our Lord. Lord! Judge fairly between us and our nation. You are the best of judges.” And these elders who had disbelieved from among his nation said: “If you follow Shu‘ayb, you will end up in great loss.” So a jolt shook them and they were left lying face-down in their houses. Those who denied Shu‘ayb were such as if they never lived in that settlement. Those who denied Shu‘ayb, it was they who ended up as losers. So, Shu‘ayb left them saying: “People of My Nation! I have delivered the messages of my Lord to you and remained your well-wisher. So now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!” (85-93)

Explanation

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۵۹﴾[39]

Since the Quraysh are warned in this *sūrah*, first the accounts of those nations are taken up which became famous while inhabiting the north, the south and the north west of Arabia. All of them were destroyed because they denied their respective messengers. The sequence adopted is historical. For this reason, the nation of Noah (sws) is taken up the first. Only that portion of the account of each nation is mentioned which was essential for the purpose of warning the Quraysh.

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[39] We sent forth Noah as a messenger to his people. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.”

It has been referred to earlier that the root of all anarchy in a society is polytheism, If a nation becomes incriminated with it, it means that it has deviated not only in its faith and ideology but also, as a consequence, in morality. Now its existence will not produce and good; it will create disruption in the society and as long as it exists, disorder and disruption will continue to plague every sphere of individual and collective lives. It is for this reason that God’s Messengers begin their preaching with this tenet. This is such a distinctive feature of the preaching of a messengers that it is not possible that it be left out.

The words “I fear for you the torment of a horrible day” depict the actual warning sounded by Noah (sws). This refers to the horrible day in which they will encounter their punishment in this world. Messengers of God warn their nations of two types of punishments: one that visits them in this very world if they deny their respective messenger and the other that they will encounter on the Day of Judgement. Concomitant indications show that here the first of these punishments is referred to. The reason that this punishment is mentioned in such words is that it is not of the nature of warning or admonition: such is its intensity that it uproots a whole nation. After that they cease to exist in their nation capacity. In verse 135 of Sūrah Shu‘arā’, the words ascribed to prophet Noah (sws) are: اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ.[40] Verses 138-139 depict the response and the worldly punished that visited them as a consequence of this response: وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً.[41]

قَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٦٠﴾[42]

This retort by the elders of the nation to Noah (sws) meant that in the first place he has humiliated the religion of his forefathers by denying the deities they have been worshipping and in the second he is threatening them with divine punishment whereas their financial and living conditions are far superior to him and his followers.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَاَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾[43]

This reply from Noah (sws) reflects his utter concern and sympathy as well as the selfless nature of his invite. He fears for his nation a great punishment if they do not mend their ways. In spite of its malice, stubbornness and enmity he is standing firm only for its benefit and tolerating all the pain and sorrow inflicted on him. These people only see the apparent; hence to them the threat of the punishment seems very strange; however, Noah (sws) has knowledge from God what they do not have. If they look beyond their outward prosperity and concentrate on their follies, they would realize the truth of what Noah (sws) is saying.

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[40] Indeed, I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.”

[41] No torment is going to visit us. So, they rejected him. Thus We destroyed them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this.

[42] The elders of his nation replied: “We see you in manifest error. ”

[43] He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not in any error. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the whole universe. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and being your well-wisher and know from God which you do not know.

أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ [44]

No answer is given to the question raised in this verse. This is because the question is meant to express sorrow. Concealed in this style is that if they had reflected and done away with arrogance, they would have expressed gratitude at God’s favour of sending a messenger from among themselves. Noah (sws) is not a stranger to them. His past and present as well as his character and conduct are well known to them. He speaks the same language and his heart reflects their nature. So would this have been better that for the conclusive communication of the truth an angel descends from the heaven or that a well-wisher from their own lot bears witness to the truth before them in their own language. All these details are concealed in this style and this concealment is in fact a requisite of eloquence at this instance. After all, what is the use to express one’s anguish before people who have already taken to criticism and objection.

Evident from the words “and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you” is that the real purpose of a messenger’s warning is to produce God’s fear and it is this fear that will make people entitle to His mercy both in this world and in the next. On the other hand, those who demand a sign for punishment and want to observe angels only invite God’s doom.

فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَأَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ [45]

Finally what Noah (sws) had warned them of actually materialized. It should be kept in mind that only those were drowned who persisted in his denial and in the denial of God’s signs. The established practice of God is that His punishment visits only those people to whom truth has been conclusively communicated by their respective messenger. Noah’s people inhabited the land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Whether in those times, human beings existed in other parts of the world or not is a question whose answer is based on information that is speculative. So I would refrain from commenting on it. However, what is certain is that only those people

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44. Did you find it strange that you received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may inform you and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you?”

45. Then these people rejected him. So, We saved him and those who were with him on the ship and drowned those who denied Our revelations. Indeed, these people were blind.

were visited by the punishment who had denied Noah (sws).

Here the difference between punishment and trial must be kept in mind. At times a nation is afflicted with some disaster, famine, epidemic, earthquakes or storms etc. These are God-sent in order to awaken it from its slumber. In such situations, it is not necessary that a calamity strike only those who are the wrongdoers; in fact, both good and bad people are affected by it. On the other occasions, after conclusive communication of the truth the Almighty sends a decisive torment to a nation because of its misdeeds. In this case, only the wrongdoers are affected by it. Others who have taken up the task of reformation or are followers who take up this task are saved.

The word عمون is the plural of عمی. This word means those who are blind in the eye and can also mean those who are blind in their intellect. Here it is used in the latter meaning. In other words, the reason of why God destroyed this nation is stated in this word: they had lost their intellect. A messenger of God is the final means of conclusive communication of the truth. Once he fulfils this obligation, no other means is left for such communication. For this reason, those who do not open their eyes after his warnings negate their own existence in this world. Why should God keep alive those who eyes of the heart have become blind?

وَاِلٰى عَادٍ اَخَاهُمْ هُوْدًا ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖٓ
اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ سَفَاهَةٍ وَّاِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ سَفَاهَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾
اُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَاَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿٦٨﴾[46]

The ‘Ād were the oldest nation of Arabia. They belonged to the Semitic race. Their abode was the land of Aḥqāf. It is evident from the words “and recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah” that after the deluge, some elders of this nation migrated to the northern part of Arabia and gradually achieved great majesty and splendour. In classical Arabic literature, they are proverbial for their height and also in their bravery and chivalry. The word “their brother” refers to God’s favour to the people of Hūd (sws) mentioned at other instances as “a messenger from among them.” That a messenger is from among the people to whom he conclusively communicates the truth is a huge favour of the Almighty. This has already been explained above as well as in Sūrah al-Baqarah. However, like every other favour, this favour too was not valued by nations.

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[46] And to ‘Ād, We sent their brother Hūd. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. Then do you not have fear ?” The elders of his nation, who had taken to disbelief, replied: “We see you inflicted with foolishness and We regard you to be among the liars.” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not inflicted with any foolishness. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the worlds. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and am a sincere well-wisher of yours.

The words “then do you not have fear” of Hūd (sws) occur in the same context as “I fear for you the torment of a horrible day” of Noah (sws) cited earlier.

The implication of “we see you inflicted with foolishness” is that the people of Hūd (sws) thought that their prosperity was not a means of earning wrath; it showed that they have favour in the eyes of God and are on the straight path. Thus his claim of being a messenger of God is a total lie and bluff.

The attribute اَمِيْنٌ in وَاَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ اَمِيْنٌ occurs the same way as it does in verse in verse 143 of Sūrah Shu‘arā’: إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (I am for you a trustworthy messenger). A great trait of a messenger is that he us trustworthy. Whatever message is entrusted to him is delivered by him with full sincerity and faithfulness of content.

The words “and recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah ” do not mean that the people of Hūd (sws) were given political authority in exactly the same land as that of the people of Noah (sws). The latter inhabited the north and the former lived in the south. In other words, the similarity is only in political authority. These words of Hūd (sws) not only recount God’s favour to his nation but also carry warning in them. The favour obviously relates to political authority; the warning they encapsulate is that when they have been made to succeed the people of Noah (sws), then they should also bear in mind their anecdote and their fate. If they too adopt a similar attitude, there is no reason that they too should not meet a different fate. The law of God is the same for all.

اَوَ عَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ ۭ وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصۜطَةً ۚ فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾[47]

In the expression وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصۜطَةً, the word خَلْق means “form.” Thus for example in verse 119 of Sūrah al-Nisā’, it is said: وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ (I will induce them such that they would distort the form created by God). This form can refer to both internal and external forms. This is because at the behest of Satan, the Idolaters perverted their own natures and also slit the ears of animals, as is referred to in the Qur’ān. The word بَصَطَةً and بَصۜطَةً are the same. It means “vastness” and “immensity.” Granting vastness in both internal and external forms means that they were given superiority in their intellect and in their physique. Historical traditions of the Arabs also substantiate this fact that the ‘Ād were prominent with regard to both these aspects. In verse 247 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, about Saul it is similarly said: وَزَادَهٗ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ (He gave him plentiful knowledge and physique).

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47. Did you find it strange that you have received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may warn you? And recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah and made you strong and mighty in physique. So, keep in mind the majesties of God so that you may succeed.”

The word الآءَ is the plural of إِلْى and أَلىَ and إِلىَ. Generally, lexicographers regard it to mean “favours.” However, this is not true. It means feats, miracles, majesty and splendour. My mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, in his *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān* has researched the meaning of this word and cited ten couplets from poets belonging to the pre-Qur’ānic era to corroborate these meanings.[48]

What Hūd (sws) has said here encapsulates both favour and warning. The implication is that his people should duly value the favour of intellect and physique God has blessed them with and express gratitude to Him and must not fall into any trial because of them. They must keep in mind the splendour and majesty of God because this is precisely the path of success. If they show arrogance, they should know that very stern is God’s grasp.

قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَحْدَهٗ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[49]

Concealed in this sentence from his nation is both anger and sarcasm. It also indicates that his people actually had high expectations from Hūd (sws) to further increase the respect of their ancestral religion and their own too; on the contrary, he ended up an enemy of everyone.

They further meant that they will not be over-awed by his threats and abandon their ancestral religion even if Hūd (sws) is truthful in his claim of bringing God’s punishment to them.

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَّ غَضَبٌ ؕ اَتُجَادِلُوْنَنِيْ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ
سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ فَانْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[50]

The style قَدْ وَقَعَ is the same as اَتٰٓى اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ[51]. In other words, this thing has been destined to happen and they have become worthy of it. Only its time of manifestation is awaited. The word رِجْسٌ means “filth” and “impurity.” Here it refers to the filth of disbelief and polytheism as well to misdeeds and bad conduct. There is an intrinsic relation of cause and effect between رِجْسٌ (filth) and غَضَبٌ (anger). In other words, if the people of Hūd (sws)are demanding punishment, not much time is left in its manifestation. It has all but arrived because they have gathered all the filth that can ignite God’s anger. His torment is now at hand.

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[48] Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maṭba‘ Iṣlāḥ, 1358 AH), 11.

[49] They replied: “Have you come to us so that we worship only one God and leave aside those who our forefathers have been worshipping? So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful. ”

[50] So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful. ” He said: “Filth and wrath will come upon you from your Lord. Are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction? So wait; I shall also be among those who wait.”

[51] The directive of God has been pronounced. (16:1)

The words “are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction?” are a response to the statement of his nation that how can they leave their deities that are being worshipped since the time of their forefathers. When these deities are mere names whose entities have no proof of existence, why have they given them this status and fighting with Hūd (sws) about them? As far as God is concerned, they know that His existence is indisputable and they have its proof; but as for these idols, what proof of existence do they have?

The advent of punishment is a certainty as they have made themselves worthy of it. However, it is God’s prerogative of bringing it forth. So both should wait.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾[52]

This verse depicts the established practice of God that necessarily manifests itself once the truth has been conclusively conveyed. Through His special grace and favour, He sifts out His messenger and his companions from the place where the punishment is destined to descend and the rest of the nation is destroyed. This decisive punishment comes when a nation because of its stubbornness and obduracy shows that it has no capacity left in it to accept faith. The words “and they were not prepared to believe” point to this very aspect.

وَاِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ
اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْۤ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾[53]

The Thamūd are from among the remnants of the ‘Ād and are also called the second ‘Ād. They lived in north west Arabia. It may well be that at the time of their destruction some of them remained safe and they may have migrated from the south to the north and then started to live in the land of Ḥijr. The attributes of the ‘Ād and the Thamūd are very similarly mentioned in the Qur’ān and Arab traditions. Some poets mention them in a way as if there is no difference between them. The leaders of both – Qayl and Qaydār – because of which these nations were punished, have become proverbial in Arabic literature and it seems that both had the same traits and attributes.

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52. Thus, We saved him and his companions through Our grace and severed the roots of those who denied Our revelations and they were not prepared to believe.

53. And to the Thamūd, We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you.

Consider the words: “A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you.” They form Ṣāliḥ’s answer to his nation’s demand for punishment. He repeatedly warned them that they must not think that their days of comfort will remain forever. Their luxurious life-style, their orchards and fountains, their crops and fields and their advancements and developments will see their end. They should fear God’s retribution and listen to Ṣālih (sws). If they follow their unrestrained leaders, who are spreading disorder in the land, they will end up in the pit of destruction. His nation responded to him by saying that he was a lunatic and why should he believe in his boastful claims when he is an ordinary human being like them. They stated that they will only listen to him if he brings a sign of the punishment. In return, Ṣāliḥ earmarked a she-camel and ascribed it to God, as this sign. If they harm her, they would be inflicted with God’s punishment. She is a shield for them against God’s punishment. If they break it, then nothing will be able to save them from this punishment.

Ascribing the she-camel to God meant that it was dedicated to God the way animals of sacrifice are dedicated to Him in Islam. Just as it is a great crime in Islam to attack such animals, about the she-camel too, Ṣāliḥ (sws) warned that none should harm her lest God’s torment would crush them.

This she-camel was earmarked by Ṣāliḥ (sws) as a feeler: if they kill her, it would be a certain proof that now these oppressors will show the audacity to kill Ṣāliḥ regarding him to be a liar. As per God’s established practice, it is at this stage when a messenger is asked to migrate and punishment visits his nation.

From no word of the Qur’ān is it indicated that this she-camel was a sign because of having some extra-ordinary features in her form. In fact, it is evident from the words “and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you” that it was a sign with regard to the consequence of harming her. To the best of my knowledge, there is no authentic narrative that says that this she-camel was born from a mountain or a hillock. For this reason, it should not be given any importance. The word آية means “sign” and “indication.” This she-camel was demarcated as a sign of punishment in response to the demand that such a sign be presented. Thus it is mentioned in the Qur’ān that when the leader of the Thamūd hamstrung her, the punishment descended on them on the third day. This incident is narrated in the Qur’ān with various details in different *sūrahs*. Here is one example to facilitate our understanding:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ . اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ صٰلِحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ. اِنِّیْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ. فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ. وَ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ
عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِیَ اِلَّا عَلٰی رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. اَتُتْرَكُوْنَ فِیْ مَا هٰهُنَآ اٰمِنِيْنَ. فِیْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ. وَّ زُرُوْعٍ وَّ نَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا
هَضِيْمٌ . وَ تَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا فٰرِهِيْنَ. فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ. وَ لَا تُطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ. الَّذِيْنَ يُفْسِدُوْنَ فِی

الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ. قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ. مَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۚ فَاْتِ بِاٰيَةٍ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ. قَالَ
هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ. وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ. فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا نٰدِمِيْنَ.
فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ. وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ. (٧:١٤١-١٥٩)

The Thamūd also denied the messengers when their brother Ṣāliḥ warned them: “Do you people have no fear of God? I am for you a trusted messenger. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not demand any recompense on this from you. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds.” Will you be left to dwell here among these favours secure from every danger? Amid orchards, springs, cultivated lands and date palms whose bunches are closely-knit? And continue to happily carve out houses in mountains? So, fear God and obey me and do not listen to those who exceed limits who spread disorder in the land and do not mend affairs.” They said: “You only seem to be a person under the influence of magic. You are but a human being like us. So, bring a sign if you are truthful.” He said: “This is a she-camel. One day, it will be her turn to drink water and another turn of a fixed day is for you. And do not harm it otherwise the torment of a horrible day shall seize you.” Thus they slew her. So, they were left to regret. Ultimately, the torment seized them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And indeed your Lord is Mighty and Merciful. (7:141-159)

It may be noted that instead of sending punishment at the demand of the Thamūd, a sign for punishment was given. This signifies God’s mercy. He shows delay in wrath and haste in mercy. For this reason, He gave them further respite so that those who could pay heed are given the opportunity to do so. However, instead of paying heed they took the last step of audacity by killing the she-camel. After this, it is evident from other instances of the Qur’ān that they were given a further respite of three days so that even then if they wanted they could desist from their evil ways.

Ṣāliḥ (sws) had directed that the she-camel must be allowed to graze in the whole land wherever she wanted to. No one should go near her. A separate day was fixed for her to drink water from the rest of the animals of the nation. This directive was meant to test the nation so that the malice and animosity they have is exposed and nothing remains concealed.

وَ اذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَّ بَوَّاَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْ سُهُوْلِهَا قُصُوْرًا وَّ تَنْحِتُوْنَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوْتًا ۚ
فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾[54]

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[54] 54. And recall when God made you succeed the nation of ‘Ād and granted you authority in the land: you make forts in its lands and carve houses from mountains. So, remember the majesties of God and do not spread disorder in the land.”

As a nation, the Thamūd attained great heights in the land of Ḥijr which they inhabited. They enjoyed power and authority there and a lot of remnants of their architectural feats still exist. While travelling to Syria, the Quraysh used to pass by their settlements. For this reason, they were fully aware of their account and had also observed the place they lived. If Ṣāliḥ (sws) reminded them of their position of authority as successors of the ‘Ād nation, it was, as mentioned earlier, to not forget the power of God while being themselves inebriated with power. He will deal with them in the same manner He dealt with the ‘Ād. He has the same yardstick for all.

The words جبل and سهل are opposites. The former means a hilly area and the latter refers to flat land at the based of hills. The Thamūd reached great heights in the art of construction. They constructed grand palaces both in hilly areas by carving them out and also in flat areas of land. Some of their feats of construction still exist. They show their finesse and perfection. Ṣāliḥ (sws) expressed his sorrow on their passion for building structures right when they had reached their pinnacle. This shows that constructing grand buildings is not a sign of development of a nation; it is in fact a sign of its decadence. These sky scrapers ultimately become its tombs and graveyards and are inhabited by wild animals. Ṣāliḥ (sws) reminded them to bear in mind the majesty and splendour of God and not spread disorder in His land.

قَالَ الۡمَلَاُ الَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا مِنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتُضۡعِفُوۡا لِمَنۡ اٰمَنَ مِنۡهُمۡ اَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ اَنَّ صٰلِحًا مُّرۡسَلٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا
بِمَاۤ اُرۡسِلَ بِهٖ مُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۷۵﴾[55]

The invitation of a messenger is first always accepted by the poor and the weak because they are devoid of arrogance and it is this arrogance which is the greatest hindrance in accepting the truth. I have explained it under the incident of Satan and Adam’s creation.

The question “do you think that Ṣāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” posed by the arrogant individuals of Thamūd to the believers was sarcastic in nature. It meant that if these believers think that Ṣāliḥ (sws) is a messenger of God, then they are very naïve. The answer given by the believers “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent” is a step ahead from the actual answer. They did not merely confine themselves to acknowledging the messengerhood of Ṣāliḥ (sws), they expressed their strong conviction at the veracity of his real message. Such was the nature of this stern and assertive answer that it proved that those who were hitherto subservient will not any longer remain subservient in the matter of the truth.

It is evident from these details that though initially the poor and the weak first profess faith in messengers of God, what appeals to them is the strength in arguments presented by the messenger and not by any miracles. On the other hand, those who claim to be superior and intelligent remain entangled in the demand of miracles and signs until the very end. Their eyes only open when the torment breaks their backs.

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[55] The arrogant elders of his nation said to the subservient among them who had accepted faith: “Do you think that Ṣāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” They replied: “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent.” The arrogant said: “We disbelieve in what you have believed.”

قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا بِالَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾[56]

These words express the final dismay of the arrogant elements.

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾[57]

The word عَقَرَ means to hamstring a male or a female camel. When the verb عَتَوْ occurs with عَنْ it encompasses the meanings of both arrogance and disobedience. This was the ultimate step of rebelliousness taken by the nation. By killing the she-camel, they challenged Ṣāliḥ (sws) to bring the punishment he was threatening them with.

This was the final expression of his nation in denying Ṣālih (sws). Any further respite given to them would have resulted in their killing him. Because of this reason, the punishment visited them on the third day. Though it was only the rebellious leader of the Thamūd who killed the she-camel, as is specified in Sūrah Shams; however, since everyone consented to this heinous act, her killing is ascribed to the whole nation.

فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾[58]

The word رَجْفَةٌ means "a shudder" and "a jolt. It signifies the punishment that visited the nation of Thamūd. At another instance (54:31), the word صَيْحَةٌ is used to depict this punishment. At some places (eg. 41:13), the word used is صَاعِقَةٌ. In verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah, the word used is الطَّاغِيَةٌ which means something that crosses the limits. Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt has discussed in detail the nature of punishments which visited the ‘Ād and the Thamūd. He has summarized the discussion at the end in the following words:

> It is evident from these details that God sent on them the punishment of winter clouds, stormy winds and horrific thunder. Since the real destruction actually took place because of the severity in winds, if the effect produced by the cause is considered, it will become evident that God had sent striped clouds of winter which concealed horrific thunder and a deafening shout the way He had sent

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56. The arrogant said: "We disbelieve in what you have believed."

57. Then they hamstrung the she-camel and disobeyed the directive of their Lord and said: "Ṣāliḥ! If you have been sent by God, bring on us the torment you are threatening us with."

58. Thus a shudder overtook them and they were left lying face down in their homes.

clouds of thunder and lightning to the nation of the ‘Ād.[59]

Nevertheless it does not necessarily follow from the word رَجْفَةٌ that their punishment was of the nature of an earthquake. It merely signifies a torment. It seems that the northern wind called *ṣarṣar* blew in the form of a storm. It ravaged everything. Such was the nature of its intensity that people fell on the ground facewards and died in this state.

The word دار is used here in the meaning of ديار.

Thus in verse 65 of Sūrah Hūd, the word دار used and in verse 67 the word ديار is used in connection with the Thamūd. It is as if the Qur’ān has itself explained the word.

فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ [60]

These words constitute the last address of Ṣāliḥ (sws) to his nation. It is obvious that he said these words before the advent of the punishment at the time when the she-camel had been killed. After uttering these farewell words, he left his people. This was in accordance with God’s established practice that messengers migrate from the place at His behest from the place where the punishment is destined to come. It is specified in the Qur’ān that after the killing of the she-camel, the Thamūd were given a further respite of three days. Besides having other benefits, one reason of this was that Ṣāliḥ (sws) and his companions were afforded with the opportunity to go far enough from the area so as to not be the target of the punishment.

Here a question arises about the sequence of narration. Why is this statement of Ṣāliḥ (sws) mentioned after the torment? The answer to this question is that this sequence of narration has much to do with the requisites of eloquence. To highlight the immediate consequence of the crime, the torment is mentioned right after the killing of the she-camel and the mention of Ṣāliḥ’s (sws) migration is deferred. In other words, as soon as they challenged God by harming the she-camel, the torment visited them. The immediate and forthwith arrival of the punishment could not have been demonstrated if its mention was deferred by stating something in between. There are many examples of this style in the Qur’ān. One such example is coming up in the anecdote of the nation of Shu‘ayb (sws) further down in this *sūrah*. In verses 42-45, of Sūrah Hūd another very obvious and eloquent example can be seen.

One thing which is evident from these anecdotes is that the words “O My Nation” occur very frequently. They are not merely something to pacify it; in fact, just as a person’s own self and his family have a right on him, in a similar way, his nation and country also have this right. The requisite of this right is that a person should be its well-wisher with full sincerity, sympathy and concern. Without this, he cannot fulfil this obligation towards his nation. He who is able to fulfil it is successful in the eyes of God and will not be help answerable if the nation takes to the path of destruction. Conversely, people who did not fulfil this obligation will necessarily be held accountable.

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[59] Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 134.

[60] So, Ṣāliḥ walked off from them, saying: “O People of My Nation! I have delivered to you the message of My Lord and have been your well-wisher. But you do not like well-wishers.”

The sentence "but you do not like well-wishers" does not merely express sorrow at their response; it is also a statement of fact. There may come a phase in the disorder and disruption in the behaviour of a nation when values and norms become topsy turvy: even expressing concern for it becomes a dangerous proposition. Those who invite the wrath of God become its leaders and heroes and those who try to save it from torment are regarded as its ill-wishers and enemies. The reason for this is evident: when a sick person becomes an enemy of his doctors and care-givers and only likes to accept the advice of those who would want to increase his ailment, then the only consequence of this is death.

وَلُوۡطًا اِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهٖۤ اَتَاۡتُوۡنَ الۡفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمۡ بِهَا مِنۡ اَحَدٍ مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ [61]

Lot (sws) was Abraham's (sws) nephew. His people lived in the area that lies to the south of Syria around the river Jordan. The style in which he is mentioned here is different from the ones Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ are mentioned earlier. They are mentioned by the words اَخَاهُمۡ هُوۡدًا (their brother Hūd) and اَخَاهُمۡ صَالِحًا (their brother Ṣāliḥ) in relation to their nations. However, Lot's nation is regarded as his nation but he is not ascribed to it as its brother. It is evident from this that his nation was regarded to be his because he preached to them and not because he belonged to them. This slight distinction is made evident in the way he is mentioned by the Qur'ān. God's established practice is that a messenger belongs to the nation he preaches. The wisdom behind this is that a nation be aware of his past and present, character and conduct as well as their language. In this way, he is well known to them and they do not feel the discomfort of encountering someone from outside. Just as this status is obtained by being part of its lineage, it is also acquired by living a long period with and among it. Since Lot (sws) spent a long time with his nation; in fact, concomitant indications show that he had married among it, it was as if he belonged to it. It is evident from the Torah that Abraham (sws) had groomed him. Because of these traits, he was sent to this nation as a messenger. This is precisely the same case as with Moses (sws). Even though he did not belong to the nation of the Pharaoh, he had spent a long time among them. For this reason, the Almighty had sent him as a messenger to it.

The word الۡفَاحِشَةَ in the verse means blatant sexual impropriety and lewdness. The interrogative nature of the sentence is meant to express disgust and aversion. Though

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61. And We sent Lot when he said to his nation: "Do you commit open vulgarity? No nation before you has perpetrated it.

the nature of this misconduct is not specified, This quite evidently shows that such was its rampant nature in the society that it was known to all and sundry without even naming it

The expression مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا is not an attribute of الْفَاحِشَةَ. Had it been so, the latter should have occurred without the definite article. In my opinion, this expression actually is an independent sentence. Here Lot (sws) has expressed his disgust on this wrongdoing in two different ways: first he regarded them to be guilty of a blatant indecency which is evident to every upright person as a heinous sin. He then stated that this was never done by any earlier nation.

The words “no nation before you has perpetrated it” do not necessarily mean that this indecency was not perpetrated by any previous nation. The word اَحَدٍ also implies plurality. For example, in verse 285 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهٖ (we do not differentiate between any of His messengers) and in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ (you are not like other women).

For this reason, it can also mean that before them there never ever has existed a wretched society in which this filth became a part and parcel of their lives the way it has enveloped their society.

Here a question arises: the preaching of all the messengers mentioned earlier began with inviting their respective nation to the belief of monotheism; however, in the case of Lot (sws), his preaching began by taking notice of the lewd practices of his nation. Does this mean that his nation was not incriminated with the evil creed of polytheism? If it was present, then why did Lot (sws) choose to ignore it? The answer to this question, in my opinion, is that evils have different types. One type of evil, however grave it may be, is the one that afflicts human nature and is found in human beings. The second type is one which is so horrible in extent that if it is found as a habit in a person or as a fashion in a society, then this is only possible if the nature of that person and that society has been completely perverted. Where such people exist, the real need is to set right their evil habit however much important other deviations may be. They will all be regarded as secondary. If you go to a person and see that he is standing eating filth, will you urge him to be more religious or will this pathetic situation attract your attention foremost? Lot (sws) was faced with such an ordeal. His people were inflicted with the evils of polytheism and disbelief and other evils too which were the consequence of polytheism and disbelief. However, people whose nature has been perverted to the extent that men seek men for sexual pleasure, the need is to take them out of this quicksand of filth first of all. Any other discussion with them must relate to a second phase.

It can be estimated from this discussion the heinous status sodomy occupies in the eyes of the Qur’ān.

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَآءِ ط بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿٨١﴾[62]

This is the third aspect of hate. Its intensity is apparent from the stress found in the sentence. The word رجال is also meaningful here because it is used for men of mature age. By using this verb, firstly the heinous nature of the act is depicted and secondly of the licentiousness that a nation is necessarily overcome with when this wretched ailment becomes rampant in it. The consequence of this is that the sensitivity regarding age is done away with. Licentious individuals of all ages scatter and spread in the nation and this curse become a habit and profession for them.

The words "leaving aside women" depict the transformation that is the natural consequence of this perversion: creative energy is wasted in the pursuit of a totally wrong target. Barren lands are watered and crops are left dry. The result of this is destruction of civilization and humanity, and humiliation in the Hereafter. The words "you are absolutely senseless; in fact, people who have crossed limits" depict their rebelliousness against human nature and its fate.

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ قَالُوْٓا أَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾[63]

It is evident from the style of the discourse that every sentence uttered by Lot (sws) was an eye-opener that was meant to jolt and shake them. However, such words can have no effect on people whose nature has become perverted and who have lost their senses. Their reply shows that the society had reached its lowest level of decadence. When a society reaches this level, a time comes that every person becomes an embodiment of evil and being evil becomes a requisite of fashion. It is evident from the words "they pose to be very pious" what the people of Lot's nation regarded him and thought of themselves as incriminated with filth. However, instead of regarding his piety to be a likeable trait, it weighed down heavily on them and they wanted him to become one of them.

فَأَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهٗٓ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهٗ ۖ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ط فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾[64]

The words "they pose to be pious" show that there were some people who had professed faith in Lot (sws). However, this verse shows that only his family members were the ones who had accepted faith. Had there been others besides them, they would have been mentioned among those who had been delivered. In my opinion, a very

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62. You fulfil your sexual desires through men leaving aside women? You are absolutely senseless; in fact people who have crossed the limits.

63. At this, his nation merely replied: "Expel these people from your settlement ; they pose to be very pious. "

64. So, We saved him and his family except his wife who was among those who were left behind.

small group professed faith in him as is evident from the word “people” (اُنَاسٌ); however, all of them belonged to his family. For this reason, they are referred to by the word اَهْل.

From among his family too, his wife was not included. Its obvious reason was her perversion and the reason for her perversion could have been reinforced by belonging to this morally corrupt nation by birth, as referred to earlier. One’s bias towards one’s family and nation often becomes a hindrance in the cause of the truth. Only those people are able to break this barrier who are so intensely attached to God that this attachment prevails over all other feelings. The Qur’ān has mentioned this case especially to make evident the fact that only they are led to the path of salvation who seek it and are able to forsake other desires that hinder it. If someone does not have this love for the truth and he does not have the spirit to sacrifice for its sake, then even being the wife of a prophet or his son or father or uncle cannot earn him salvation. Thus the fate of Lot’s wife, Noah’s son, Abraham’s father and Muḥammad’s uncle is an indisputable evidence of this fact.

Here rain refers to the rain of pebbles and stones. The tempestuous wind that visited Lot’s nation arose from the desert and the pebbles and stones it picks up are showered on caravans and settlements that totally ravage them. The Arabs call it حاصب or a storm that rains down pebbles. Ustādh Farāhī, while referring to the details of this storm, writes:

> The Almighty unleashed a dust-laden storm on the people of Lot (sws) which finally took the shape of a pebble and stone hurling wind. This at first rained down pebbles and stones on them and later when the storm picked up, it destroyed all the houses. While referring to the people of Lot (sws), it is stated: فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا (٤٠:٢٩) (on some We sent down a violent stone-hurling wind, (29:40)). At another instance the words used about them are: فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَ اَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ (٧٤:١٥) (We razed their city to the ground and let loose a shower of clay-stones upon them, (15:74)). In other words, such was the nature of this strong wind that the houses and roofs were razed to ground and the pebbles and stones completely covered them. At another place, the words are: وَ الْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ اَهْوٰى.فَغَشّٰهَا مَا غَشّٰى (٥٣: ٥٣-٥٤) (and overthrew the overthrown cities; thus there covered them that which did cover them, (53:53-54)).[65]

After that, Ustādh Farāhī, while criticizing the translators of the Torah, has explained how by making a mistake in the translation they ended up totally misstating the while incident. He has then summarized his critique thus:

> It is evident from this that the Almighty sent upon them the punishment of a

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[65] Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 129.

stone-hurling windstorm which covered them as well as their dwellings. If the statement of the Torah in this regard is also accepted, it will become further evident that besides this stone-hurling windstorm, they also faced the punishment of lightning and thunder.[66]

وَاِلٰى مَدْيَنَ اَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَ
الْمِيْزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾[67]

The place inhabited by the nation of Madyan was along the shores of the Red Sea towards the south east of mount of Sinaī. The Prophet Shu‘ayb (sws) was sent to them. He was the same person who had wedded his daughter with Moses (sws). The latter had stayed a long time with him and attended to his herd. This whole anecdote is mentioned in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ and is a very noble account of a very noble prophet.

Since the people of Madyan lived along an important trade route, they had become very advanced in trade. Later, just as their beliefs got corrupted, other evils that generally corrupt a trading nation also contaminated them. These evils are mentioned ahead when Shu‘ayb (sws) began to preach to them.

The details of “the clear proof” referred to here are neither mentioned in the Qur’ān nor in the Torah. It may refer to a visual miracle which in accordance with God’s established practice may have been given to Shu‘ayb (sws) also, just as it was given to other messengers. However, the Qur’ān has just referred to it without explaining its nature. It is also possible that this refers to his own self and his preaching. This is because a messenger in his being is a complete proof and a conclusive means of communication. He delineates the truth from every aspect to such an extent that no one except the stubborn are left with an excuse to deny it. A miracle is not a requisite of prophethood; it is from among its secondary elements. If at the demand of a nation, God wants, He shows to it a miracle through its prophet for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth. The actual content of the preaching of a prophet is based on clear and conclusive proofs which are innately found in human nature and intellect. His life is an embodiment of these and he is like a light from God walking among his compatriots. Such is the evidence borne by every word he utters, every gesture he makes and every action he does that only those people deny him who refute an evidence their own hearts bear.

Since in trading things are generally weighed and measured, so this is what is mentioned in the verse. The real purpose is that all dealings must be based on honesty and uprightness. Being dishonest in measuring and weighing is not an independent wrongdoing: it actually is an expression of many wrongdoings that are found in a nation. It is a sign of disruption in the concept of justice and fairness and of a nation become bereft of adhering to truth and justice. The resultant disorder engulfs every sphere of life but like a cancer cell manifests in some bodies in some way and others in other ways. Since the people of Madyan were traders by profession, it manifested itself in them in the form of dishonesty in measurement and weighing. However, it had actually infiltrated in their whole society. For this reason, the Qur’ān while emphasizing honesty in measurement and weighing has also explained the negative aspect of it by saying that they should not spread disorder in the land. The implication is that such dishonesty totally disrupts the society. If they do not change their ways, every building block of a society will get displaced from its place because God has set up the heavens and the earth on a scale. If this scale gets disrupted even for a moment, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed. This is a reference to the fact that even in their own circle of authority people will be able to establish the system of the country as long as they are able to establish justice. If they disturb this justice, then every connection of the building blocks of a society will be severed. In verses 7-9 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān, this fact is explained thus: وَاَقِيۡمُوا الۡوَزۡنَ بِالۡقِسۡطِ وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الۡمِيۡزَانَ ۙ اَلَّا تَطۡغَوۡا فِی الۡمِيۡزَانِ وَلَا تُخۡسِرُوا الۡمِيۡزَانَ.[68]

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[66] Ibid., 131.

[67] And to Madyan We sent their brother, Shu‘ayb. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear proof has come to you from your Lord. Thus weigh and measure full. Do not decrease the things of people in any way and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right. This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith.

The emphasis found in the conditional clause “after it has been set right” has been explained earlier. Here its meaning has become further evident after the afore-mentioned discussion. It is evident from earlier verses that nations because of their rebelliousness repeatedly disrupted the system of truth and justice and each time this happened, God restored it. From the anecdote of Noah (sws) to that of Shu‘ayb (sws), the history of every nation bears witness to this. The people of Madyan too were granted political authority after a corrupt system had been destroyed. These people were not unaware of religion; they, in fact, belonged to the descendents of Abraham (sws) and claimed to be the carriers of the guidance of the previous prophets. However, like other nations they had modified these teachings to bring them in harmony with their personal desires. Thus, it is on this very basis that Shu‘ayb (sws) addressed them and said: “This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith.” In other words, if they lay claim to faith, then to prove it they should desist from spreading disorder and take to mending affairs to which he is calling them to. It is this attitude which is the requirement of the faith they lay claim to.

وَ لَا تَقۡعُدُوۡا بِکُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوۡعِدُوۡنَ وَ تَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِہٖ وَ تَبۡغُوۡنَہَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَ اذۡکُرُوۡۤا اِذۡ کُنۡتُمۡ قَلِیۡلًا

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[68] And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it so that you too should not transgress that balance. And weigh justly and do not measure less.

فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۖ وَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾[69]

This is an allusion to the evil practices of his nation and how they would relish and plan in harming Muslims. They would threat them so much that they are forced to leave Shu‘ayb (sws) and the way of faith and come back to their ways.

The path to reach God is monotheism. If some tries to distort it, it will lead people to polytheism and they will go astray.

Consider the words: “Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers.” The first sentence invites people to express gratitude and the second depicts the fate of the ingrates. The implication is that at the time of Abraham (sws), they came to inhabit this land when they were a small family. God then made them into a powerful nation. Not only did they increase in number, their means and resources also increased. So much so, they flourished and developed and reached the state they are in at the advent of the final prophet. All this was God-given and it entailed their gratitude to God and the adoption of the path He likes. On the contrary, they have shown ingratitude and rebelliousness and are spreading disorder in the land of God after it had been set right. So they must not forget the fate of the wrongdoers. Close by them are the remnants of the signs of destruction of the nations of Thamūd and Lot (sws). They should learn a lesson from them.

وَإِنْ كَانَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾[70]

Here a clarification is given regarding a point about the fate the wrongdoers were earlier threatened with. The implication is that this fate is certain to befall them. If they are being given respite, they should not think that what Shu‘ayb (sws) is saying is false. Everything has a fixed time with God. The reason for this respite is that there may be others besides those who have already accepted faith who may also follow suit. Once this respite is over, God will announce His verdict.

In this verse, Shu‘ayb (sws) has referred to an established practice of God. It may be noted that one situation that may arise for messengers is that the majority of the nation rejects their invitation and becomes adamant on it. In this case, it soon becomes evident that this nation has no potential to accept faith. Then as a necessary consequence of this, the punishment also soon visits it. Another situation that can arise is that a group from among the nation accepts faith and another opposes it. This shows

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69. And do not sit on every path intimidating people, stopping the believers from the path of God and distorting it. Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers.

70. And whereas one group from among you has professed faith in what I have been sent with and another did not; so, wait until God passes His judgement between us and He is the best of judges.”

that the nation has some potential in it. It is possible that if more time is given to it, some more people may accept faith. Since God is extremely merciful to His creatures and takes time to show anger, He gives it some more time for the reason just stated. Once this period reaches its culmination, God decides the fate of the nation. Also evident from this verse is that a nation gets this respite because of the presence of the righteous in it. They are the ones who have accepted the invitation of the messenger. The word “wait” here encompasses the meaning of patience. In other words, they must patiently wait because the decision will be in accordance with justice and will be announced right at the time when it should be.

قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِیْنَ اسْتَکْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَنُخْرِجَنَّکَ یٰشُعَیْبُ وَالَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَکَ مِنْ قَرْیَتِنَاۤ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِیْ مِلَّتِنَا ؕ قَالَ اَوَ
لَوْ کُنَّا کٰرِهِیْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾[71]

This is the final warning to Shu‘ayb (sws) and his companions by the arrogant elements of their nation. His response shows that he has ignored the warning of being expelled from the nation but he took string notice of the second warning. Details are forthcoming.

قَدِ افْتَرَیْنَا عَلَی اللّٰهِ کَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِیْ مِلَّتِکُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ؕ وَ مَا یَکُوْنُ لَنَاۤ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ فِیْهَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ یَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ
رَبُّنَا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا کُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ عَلَی اللّٰهِ تَوَکَّلْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَیْنَنَا وَ بَیْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَ اَنْتَ خَیْرُ الْفٰتِحِیْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾[72]

This is a very decisive answer. It has unrelenting resolve on faith and is also a proclamation of aversion to the disbelievers. In the first place, Shu‘ayb (sws) regarded the ways of the disbelievers to be falsehood imputed to God. In other words, they consists of a pack of lies that have has been ascribed to God without any proof. In the second place, he stated that why should they return to their ways when God’s grace has delivered them from this curse.

It should be kept in mind that Shu‘ayb (sws) is also answering on behalf of his followers who before accepting faith had lived a life of error. For this reason, he has used the words “after God has delivered us.” As far as God’s messengers are concerned, even before being called to their duty they are guided by their nature. They are never contaminated with polytheism.

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71. And the elders of his nation who had turned arrogant said: “O Shu‘ayb ! We shall turn out from our settlement you and those who have professed faith with you or you must return to our ways.”

72. We would be regarded as those who have imputed falsehood to God if we return to your ways after God has delivered us. This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends. And the fact is that the knowledge of our Lord embraces everything. We have trusted our Lord. Lord! Judge fairly between us and our nation. You are the best of judges.”

Consider the words: “This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends.” The first part expresses their determination and the second one their trust in God. It is this determination and trust that is the essence of monotheism. Shu‘ayb (sws) announces to his nation in unequivocal terms that returning to it is impossible; however, God’s will prevails on everything. Succeeding in His trials depends on the urge He provides. Only He knows what is ordained for who and what fate a person is going to meet. Thus they trust God alone. He has guided them to this path and it is hoped that He will make them triumph. Thus it is their prayer to God that He judge them with fairness because He is the best of judges. Precisely the same words were uttered by Abraham (sws) as cited in verse 80 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: قَالَ اَتُحَآجُّوْٓنِّيْ فِي اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ؕ وَلَآ اَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ بِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ رَبِّيْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبِّيْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? I do not fear those who you regard as His partners. Indeed, unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things.)

وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾[73]

After hearing a decisive answer from Shu‘ayb (sws), these arrogant elements were left with nothing to say to him; however, they vented their anger by giving a final warning to the poor among them who had professed faith in him. They did not explain what they meant by “great loss” because concealed in this ambiguity was everything. Moreover, this expression also had a ring of sympathy in it. In other words, they meant that have made the pros and cons evident to them but they are not understanding what is beneficial to them. So they should endure its consequences too.

The second of the verses occurs in precisely the same words in the anecdote of the nation of Ṣāliḥ. There it was stated that it signifies punishment per se. These words do not explain its nature. In verse 94 of Sūrah Hūd, the explanation is furnished by the word صَيْحَةٌ which means a shout and thunder. In verse 189 of Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’, the words used are: عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ (the torment of the day of the canopy). It is evident from this that looking from afar, the torment seemed like a column or mountain of dust or smoke. It is evident from the anecdote of Lot’s nation that it was visited by a حَاصِب (a stone-hurling wind). In the torment of حَاصِب all three: رجفة, صيحة and ظلة exist. Details have already been given earlier. From another instance of the Qur’ān also, it is evident that the same torment visited them as the one that visited Lots’ nation. In verse 89 of Sūrah Hūd, we find the following words of warning from Shu‘ayb (sws) sounded to his nation: وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْٓ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ مِّثْلُ مَآ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ ؕ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ.[74] It is evident from the last verse that Shu‘ayb's nation too met the same fate (حَاصِب) as that of Lot (sws) which live close by.

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[73] And these elders who had disbelieved from among his nation said: “If you follow Shu‘ayb, you will end up in great loss.” So a jolt shook them and they were left lying face-down in their houses.

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ۛۚ اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوْا هُمُ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾[75]

The consequence of the torment is stated here. Both these sentences contain a veiled reference to the threats made to Shu‘ayb (sws) and his followers by the disbelievers of their nation. They threatened them that they would turn them out from their settlement. While referring to this threat, it is said that they themselves were wiped out from their settlement as if they never existed. They had threatened the companions of Shu‘ayb (sws) that if they did not stop following him, they would incur a great loss. While referring to this, it was said that those who rejected Shu‘ayb (sws) were the ones who had incurred a loss.

فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ اٰسٰى عَلٰى قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾[76]

With very minor variation in words, this verse has also occurred earlier during the anecdote of Ṣāliḥ (sws). Readers may look up verse 79. Its context and occasion were explained there. Ṣāliḥ said these words when he migrated from his nation at the behest of the Almighty and announced his acquittal. However, to show haste in the advent of punishment, it is stated after the mention of punishment. Very subtle examples of this style are found in the Qur'ān.

The words "so now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!" are not meant to negate mere sorrow; they negate sorrow shown in sympathy. The implication is that he has delivered to them God's message and has shown his fervent and incessant carefor them. If in spite of this they are bent upon their own destruction, how can he have any sympathy for them.

Section VII: Verses (94-102)

The purpose of narrating all the previous anecdotes was to inform the Quraysh that they will be judged with same criteria on which these nations were judged. If they end

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[74] "And O People of My Nation! Your stubbornness against me may become a cause of you being also visited by the calamity which visited the people of Noah or the people of Hūd or the people of Ṣāliḥ and the people of Lot are also not far away from you."

[75] Those who denied Shu‘ayb were such as if they never lived in that settlement. Those who denied Shu‘ayb, it was they who ended up as losers.

[76] So, Shu‘ayb left them saying: "People of My Nation! I have delivered the messages of my Lord to you and remained your well-wisher. So now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!"

up deny their messenger, they will meet the same fate. For this reason, in the succeeding verses the principles and lessons that can be drawn from these anecdotes so that the Quraysh know the consequences of whatever step they take.

Text and Translation

وَ مَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِیْ قَرْیَۃٍ مِّنْ نَّبِیٍّ اِلَّآ اَخَذْنَآ اَهْلَهَا بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَ الضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَضَّرَّعُوْنَ (٩٤) ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ
السَّیِّئَۃِ الْحَسَنَۃَ حَتّٰی عَفَوْا وَّ قَالُوْا قَدْ مَسَّ اٰبَآءَنَا الضَّرَّآءُ وَ السَّرَّآءُ فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَۃً وَّ هُمْ لَا یَشْعُرُوْنَ (٩٥) وَ لَوْ
اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْقُرٰۤی اٰمَنُوْا وَ اتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَیْهِمْ بَرَكٰتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ لٰكِنْ كَذَّبُوْا فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا
یَكْسِبُوْنَ (٩٦) اَفَاَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰۤی اَنْ یَّاْتِیَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا بَیَاتًا وَّ هُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ (٩٧) اَوَ اَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰۤی اَنْ یَّاْتِیَهُمْ
بَاْسُنَا ضُحًی وَّ هُمْ یَلْعَبُوْنَ (٩٨) اَفَاَمِنُوْا مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَلَا یَاْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ (٩٩) اَوَ لَمْ یَهْدِ
لِلَّذِیْنَ یَرِثُوْنَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَهْلِهَآ اَنْ لَّوْ نَشَآءُ اَصَبْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۚ وَ نَطْبَعُ عَلٰی قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا یَسْمَعُوْنَ (١٠٠)
تِلْكَ الْقُرٰی نَقُصُّ عَلَیْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآئِهَا ۚ وَ لَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَیِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانُوْا لِیُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ یَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی قُلُوْبِ الْكٰفِرِیْنَ (١٠١) وَ مَا وَجَدْنَا لِاَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ ۚ وَ اِنْ وَّجَدْنَآ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفٰسِقِیْنَ (١٠٢)

And in whichever settlement We sent a prophet as a messenger, We tested its inhabitants with financial and corporal trials so that they may realize. Then We changed their sorrow into joy so until they greatly prospered and said: “Good and bad days came to our forefathers as well.” Then We suddenly seized them while they were not even aware of it. And had the people of the settlements professed faith and adhered to piety, We would have opened the doors of blessings of the heavens and the earth to them. But they denied; so, We seized them because of their misdeeds. (94-96)

So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing? Then could they protect themselves from God’s plan? So, remember that only those people are secure from God’s plan who are to become losers. Did not those who inherited the land from its previous inhabitants learn a lesson that if We intend We can seize them right now because of their sins and put a seal on their hearts so that they are not able to hear anything? These are the settlements a part of whose anecdotes We are narrating to you. Their messengers came to them with clear signs but they did not accept faith because they had been denying earlier. In a similar manner, God seals the hearts of the disbelievers. And, in most of them, We did not find those who abide by promises. Most of them turned put to be those who break promises. (97-102)

Explanation

وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا فِیۡ قَرۡیَةٍ مِّنۡ نَّبِیٍّ اِلَّاۤ اَخَذۡنَاۤ اَهۡلَهَا بِالۡبَاۡسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ یَضَّرَّعُوۡنَ ﴿۹۴﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلۡنَا مَكَانَ السَّیِّئَةِ الۡحَسَنَةَ حَتّٰی عَفَوۡا وَّقَالُوۡا قَدۡ مَسَّ اٰبَآءَنَا الضَّرَّآءُ وَالسَّرَّآءُ فَاَخَذۡنٰهُمۡ بَغۡتَةً وَّهُمۡ لَا یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۹۵﴾[77]

Research on الۡبَاۡسَآءِ and الضَّرَّآءُ has already been presented in verse 42 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. When both these words occur in parallel, the first refers to financial trials like famine and market slumps and the second to corporal trials like disease and epidemics. However, when the latter word is used with السَّرَّآءُ, both these words encompass in themselves all types of good and bad circumstances.

The expression عفا الشيئ means something developed and became lush. The expression عفت الارض means that the earth was covered with vegetation and plants.

These verses state the established practice of the Almighty which necessarily manifests itself in the times of His prophets. It can be seen in the anecdotes of the prophets that have been narrated earlier. According to this established practice, when a prophet proclaims among his people to repent and informs them of reward and punishment, factors which facilitate this call also start to appear in this universe. On the one hand, a prophet warns people of the consequences of negligence, forgetting God and spreading anarchy in the land as well as of God's punishment in this world and the next; on the other hand, the Almighty inflicts people with trials of famines, epidemics and storms so that people can see, if they have insight, that in this manner God can seize them whenever He wants to and then none but He can save them. In this way, events corroborate the prophetic call and the effect of visual observation strengthens the evidence found in human intellect and nature. It is as if the heavens and the earth display whatever a prophet says so that those who have even the slightest ability to be influenced, bend before God and reform themselves.

They who have eyes that see and hearts that melt benefit from these trials and their attention is directed towards God. It is as if they hear the call of their messenger's preaching reverberating from all elements of nature and they just do not listen to it from their ears, they also see it from their eyes. However, for those who have become stone-hearted and deaf, God's established practice assumes a new form: God gives them respite. Prosperity replaces decadence, development and abundance of resources prevails and the days of travail and trial are erased from the minds. Then these arrogant people start to be merry and make fun of the prophet and his companions. They think that, God forbid, these naive people regard the previous famine or flood or

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[77] And in whichever settlement We sent a prophet as a messenger, We tested its inhabitants with financial and corporal trials so that they may realize. Then We changed their sorrow into joy so until they greatly prospered and said: "Good and bad days came to our forefathers as well." Then We suddenly seized them while they were not even aware of it.

some calamity to be the result of their deeds and warn them in various ways and strike weakness in their hearts, whereas what have these things got to do with faith and morality? Such change of fortunes does come in the life of nations. It is not that only they have encountered such problems; their forefathers too who were good and pious people went through them. These are all turns of fortune; sometimes constriction and sometimes abundance; at times, there is harvest and at times not; at times, there is flood and at times famine. To link these things with faith and morality is insanity and superstition.

Just as the purpose of trials and calamities is to shake and jolt people, the purpose of respite is that people who do not wake up from such instances are lulled to deep slumber so that when God's torment catches them unaware.[78]

It needs to be kept in mind that trials and tribulations which in the words of the Qur'ān are meant to make people realize their follies are general in nature. Both good and bad people become their targets. This situation becomes a source of trial and misconception for the naïve and the rebellious. They think that when such a famine or epidemic has not differentiated between people of different beliefs and ideologies and people who would rebuke them have also become its target, how can it be accepted that such an event relates to faith or morality? This thing could only have been correct if the prophet and his companions had been protected from these calamities. They contend that while they should have been doomed, these companions should have received God's blessings. When this did not happen, how can it be accepted that this calamity had anything to do with good and evil? It is this delusion which even today inflicts those inebriated with vice. They see that a cyclone drowns both good and bad people without any distinction. Similarly, they see an earthquake ravages both a mosque and a temple and a famine makes both those who pray and who do not suffer and makes no distinction between a believer and a non-believer. Such events become a trial for them. In the first place, they are not effected in any way by such events and if there is some effect, it is only transient. Very soon desires make leads them to their former indifference and heedlessness. Satan, their ring leader, once again teaches the philosophy mentioned in the first verse of this section: such good and bad circumstances befall nations as a general practice. In order to secure one's self from this fiendish delusion, one should always keep in mind that the purpose of such trials which inflict both good and evil people is not punishment; it is rather to make them realize their mistakes. The consequence of such trials is very different. If the pious are effected by it, their realization increases, as a result of which their sins are expiated and their ranks are enhanced. On the other hand, the wrongdoers who still do not realize their follies are conclusively communicated the truth from God and after this a decisive punishment visits them and they are destroyed. Only those people are

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[78] This established practice of God has also been explained under verses 42-46 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. More aspects will become evident when verse 130 of this *sūrah* is discussed.

delivered among them who continue to call them to reform themselves.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْقُرٰۤی اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكٰتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنْ كَذَّبُوْا فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾[79]

The people of the settlements referred to here are the nations whose anecdotes of denial have been narrated earlier.

Here two facts become evident:

Firstly, if a nation is given respite by providing it with means and resources, then this is not a favour or blessing from God; it is, in fact, a last ditch effort to save a patient. After that, death is imminent. It is much like a candle shining more brightly before going out.

Secondly, just as a life of faith and piety guarantees God’s blessings in the hereafter, in a similar way, if a nation adheres to these traits in this world too, it is the key to all the blessings of the heavens and the earth. Naïve are those who think that God’s fear is a hindrance in the development of a nation.

اَفَاَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰۤی اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَّهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾ اَوَ اَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰۤی اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا ضُحًی وَّهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿۹۸﴾
اَفَاَمِنُوْا مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَلَا يَاْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾[80]

The expression “people of the settlements” refers to those nations whose accounts have been narrated earlier. The plan of God is relentless. No one has the power to secure himself against it. Thus it is not appropriate for anyone to become indifferent to it. Only those people adopt such an attitude who are destined to be doomed and they will end up as losers. The word مکر means a secret plan. Secret plan means that God seizes a person from where he cannot even imagine. His established practice stated earlier in which He gives respite to a person after warning him is an example of this secret plan. People think that they have succeeded but in reality this is the very place where they will be decimated.

اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَهْلِهَآ اَنْ لَّوْ نَشَآءُ اَصَبْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۚ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰی قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾[81]

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[79] And had the people of the settlements professed faith and adhered to piety, We would have opened the doors of blessings of the heavens and the earth to them. But they denied; so, We seized them because of their misdeeds.

[80] So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing? Then could they protect themselves from God’s plan? So, remember that only those people are secure from God’s plan who are to become losers.

[81] Did not those who inherited the land from its previous inhabitants learn a lesson that if We intend We can seize them right now because of their sins and put a seal on their hearts so

The expression “those who inherited the land” refers to the Quraysh.

The sentence وَنَطۡبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ فَهُمۡ لَا يَسۡمَعُوۡنَ has the same occasion as verse 46 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ سَمۡعَكُمۡ وَ اَبۡصَارَكُمۡ وَ خَتَمَ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ مَّنۡ اِلٰهٌ غَيۡرُ اللّٰهِ يَاۡتِيۡكُمۡ بِهٖ (Ask them: Have you ever thought that if God takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than God can restore them to you?) It should remain evident that sealing of hearts is a prelude to God’s torment. Before His torment visits a nation, its hearts are first sealed. The law which governs this has been repeatedly explained in this exegesis. The Quraysh are threatened of it here that as yet their hearts have not been sealed by God; however, it may not be far when this happens because of their persistent stubbornness and they will become totally bereft of hearing and comprehending. After this prelude, His decisive punishment shall necessarily descend on them.

تِلۡكَ الۡقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآئِهَا ۚ وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانُوۡا لِيُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِمَا كَذَّبُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطۡبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿١٠١﴾[82]

When are hearts sealed? Whose hearts are sealed? What is the ultimate consequence of this? This verse answers these questions.

It is a person’s trait that when he habitually denies and deviates from the general signs of the Almighty, gradually his heart is hardened so much that if special signs are shown by messengers of God even then he is not moved. The verse states that this is how God seals the hearts of people. The task of the heart is to reflect and draw lessons. If a group becomes a blind follower of its wishes that even reminders and admonitions do not awaken it, then the ears of people belonging to this group become deaf. Itmay be noted that بِمَا كَذَّبُوۡا □ereis not the object of يُؤۡمِنُوۡا; ب is actually causative in nature.

وَمَا وَجَدۡنَا لِاَكۡثَرِهِمۡ مِّنۡ عَهۡدٍ ۚ وَاِنۡ وَّجَدۡنَاۤ اَكۡثَرَهُمۡ لَفٰسِقِيۡنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾[83]

This verse states the consequence and effect of God setting a seal on hearts: when this happens they lose their insight and they refuse to budge even after every sign is shown to them. They will repeatedly swear that if such and such a miracle is shown they will accept faith. But when they will be shown that that miracle, they will start demanding some other miracle and break their promise. The word فاسق here means

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that they are not able to hear anything?

82. These are the settlements a part of whose anecdotes We are narrating to you. Their messengers came to them with clear signs but they did not accept faith because they had been denying earlier. In a similar manner, God seals the hearts of the disbelievers.

83. And, in most of them, We did not find those who abide by promises. Most of them turned put to be those who break promises.

“breach of promise.” Verses 109-110 of Sūrah al-An‘ām discuss this topic in more detail:

وَاَقۡسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ جَهۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ لَئِنۡ جَآءَتۡهُمۡ اٰيَةٌ لَّيُؤۡمِنُنَّ بِهَا ؕ قُلۡ اِنَّمَا الۡاٰيٰتُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا يُشۡعِرُكُمۡ ۙ اَنَّهَاۤ اِذَا جَآءَتۡ لَا
يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ. وَنُقَلِّبُ اَفۡـِٕدَتَهُمۡ وَاَبۡصَارَهُمۡ كَمَا لَمۡ يُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِهٖۤ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّنَذَرُهُمۡ فِىۡ طُغۡيَانِهِمۡ يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ. (٦: ١٠٩-١١٠)

> And they swear emphatic oaths by God to convince [others] that if a miracle comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Miracles are with God alone, but what do you know that even if a miracle comes, even then they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not first profess faith and shall leave them to wander in their rebelliousness.

Later in this very *sūrah*, it is stated:

فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمُ الطُّوۡفَانَ وَالۡجَرَادَ وَالۡقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ ۟ فَاسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا وَكَانُوۡا قَوۡمًا مُّجۡرِمِيۡنَ. وَلَمَّا
وَقَعَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الرِّجۡزُ قَالُوۡا يٰمُوۡسَى ادۡعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنۡدَكَ ۚ لَئِنۡ كَشَفۡتَ عَنَّا الرِّجۡزَ لَنُؤۡمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرۡسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِىۡۤ
اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ. فَلَمَّا كَشَفۡنَا عَنۡهُمُ الرِّجۡزَ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ هُمۡ بٰلِغُوۡهُ اِذَا هُمۡ يَنۡكُثُوۡنَ. (٧: ١٣٣-١٣٥)

> So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained. Even then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: “O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you.” Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise. (7:133-135)

Section VII: Verses (103-171)

In the succeeding verses, the anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is narrated. At the same time, the complete history of the political and religious rise and fall of the Israelites is concisely yet comprehensively stated. From the historical perspective, this anecdote is the supplement of the all others recounted earlier. These anecdotes had ended on the account of Shu‘ayb (sws). According to the chronological sequence, Moses (sws) is the next in line Messenger. He had been sent to the Pharaoh and his nation. Through him, on the one hand, the truth was conclusively communicated to the Pharaoh and his nation and because he faced rejection at their hands, the latter was punished in same way as the nations from Noah (sws) to Shu‘ayb (sws) were. On other hand, the Israelites became prominent as a nation and gradually they were blessed with the mantle of religious leadership by the Almighty. They were also granted political authority by Him. However, they did not duly value both these favours. Gradually, they become incriminated with graver sins than those of the earlier nations. After the advent of Muḥammad (sws), the Quraysh were subjected to God’s law and the fate of the Israelites also hung in the balance. A decisive moment had come in the latter’s history. It was to be seen if according to the covenant they had made with God they profess faith in the unlettered prophet or not. This covenant has been mentioned in the Torah and in all previous scriptures. If they do not do so, they will meet the same fate as that of the previous nations.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

ثُمَّ بَعَثۡنَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ مُّوۡسٰی بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلٰی فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَ مَلَا۠ئِهٖ فَظَلَمُوۡا بِهَا ۚ فَانۡظُرۡ كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ وَ
قَالَ مُوۡسٰی يٰفِرۡعَوۡنُ اِنِّیۡ رَسُوۡلٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ حَقِيۡقٌ عَلٰۤی اَنۡ لَّاۤ اَقُوۡلَ عَلَی اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الۡحَقَّ ؕ قَدۡ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِبَيِّنَةٍ
مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ فَاَرۡسِلۡ مَعِیَ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ قَالَ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ جِئۡتَ بِاٰيَةٍ فَاۡتِ بِهَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ فَاَلۡقٰی
عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِیَ ثُعۡبَانٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ وَّ نَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَاِذَا هِیَ بَيۡضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾ قَالَ الۡمَلَاُ مِنۡ قَوۡمِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ
عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ يُّرِيۡدُ اَنۡ يُّخۡرِجَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَرۡضِكُمۡ ۚ فَمَاذَا تَاۡمُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اَرۡجِهۡ وَ اَخَاهُ وَ اَرۡسِلۡ فِی الۡمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾
يَاۡتُوۡكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيۡمٍ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَ جَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرۡعَوۡنَ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجۡرًا اِنۡ كُنَّا نَحۡنُ الۡغٰلِبِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾ قَالَ نَعَمۡ وَ اِنَّكُمۡ لَمِنَ
الۡمُقَرَّبِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ قَالُوۡا يٰمُوۡسٰۤی اِمَّاۤ اَنۡ تُلۡقِیَ وَ اِمَّاۤ اَنۡ نَّكُوۡنَ نَحۡنُ الۡمُلۡقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ قَالَ اَلۡقُوۡا ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَلۡقَوۡا سَحَرُوۡۤا اَعۡيُنَ
النَّاسِ وَ اسۡتَرۡهَبُوۡهُمۡ وَ جَآءُوۡ بِسِحۡرٍ عَظِيۡمٍ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ وَ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰی مُوۡسٰۤی اَنۡ اَلۡقِ عَصَاكَ ۚ فَاِذَا هِیَ تَلۡقَفُ مَا يَاۡفِكُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾
فَوَقَعَ الۡحَقُّ وَ بَطَلَ مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾ فَغُلِبُوۡا هُنَالِكَ وَ انۡقَلَبُوۡا صٰغِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۹﴾ وَ اُلۡقِیَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ قَالُوۡۤا
اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ رَبِّ مُوۡسٰی وَ هٰرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ قَالَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ اٰمَنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ قَبۡلَ اَنۡ اٰذَنَ لَكُمۡ ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَمَكۡرٌ مَّكَرۡتُمُوۡهُ فِی
الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ لِتُخۡرِجُوۡا مِنۡهَاۤ اَهۡلَهَا ۚ فَسَوۡفَ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيۡدِيَكُمۡ وَ اَرۡجُلَكُمۡ مِّنۡ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمۡ
اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّاۤ اِلٰی رَبِّنَا مُنۡقَلِبُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾ وَ مَا تَنۡقِمُ مِنَّاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ اٰمَنَّا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَآءَتۡنَا ؕ رَبَّنَاۤ اَفۡرِغۡ عَلَيۡنَا
صَبۡرًا وَّ تَوَفَّنَا مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾ وَ قَالَ الۡمَلَاُ مِنۡ قَوۡمِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ اَتَذَرُ مُوۡسٰی وَ قَوۡمَهٗ لِيُفۡسِدُوۡا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ يَذَرَكَ وَ اٰلِهَتَكَ ؕ
قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ اَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ وَ نَسۡتَحۡیٖ نِسَآءَهُمۡ ۚ وَ اِنَّا فَوۡقَهُمۡ قٰهِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾ قَالَ مُوۡسٰی لِقَوۡمِهِ اسۡتَعِيۡنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَ اصۡبِرُوۡا ۚ اِنَّ
الۡاَرۡضَ لِلّٰهِ ۟ۙ يُوۡرِثُهَا مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَ الۡعَاقِبَةُ لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اُوۡذِيۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَنَا وَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا

جِئْتَنَا ۭ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَ يَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَ لَقَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اٰلَ
فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِيْنَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ
يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰى وَ مَنْ مَّعَهٗ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّمَا طٰٓئِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَ قَالُوْا مَهْمَا تَاْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ
لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ۙ فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوْفَانَ وَ الْجَرَادَ وَ الْقُمَّلَ وَ الضَّفَادِعَ وَ الدَّمَ اٰيٰتٍ
مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ ۣ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ
لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ هُمْ بٰلِغُوْهُ
اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَاَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا يُسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ مَشَارِقَ الْاَرْضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ۭ وَ تَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنٰى عَلٰى بَنِيْٓ
اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا ۭ وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهٗ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَجٰوَزْنَا بِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْبَحْرَ
فَاَتَوْا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ يَّعْكُفُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَصْنَامٍ لَّهُمْ ۚ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى اجْعَلْ لَّنَآ اِلٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ اِنَّ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيْهِ وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَالَ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْغِيْكُمْ اِلٰهًا وَّ هُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَاِذْ
اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ يُقَتِّلُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ۭ وَفِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ
عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَوٰعَدْنَا مُوْسٰى ثَلٰثِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَّاَتْمَمْنٰهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيْقَاتُ رَبِّهٖٓ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَخِيْهِ هٰرُوْنَ
اخْلُفْنِيْ فِيْ قَوْمِيْ وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوْسٰى لِمِيْقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهٗ رَبُّهٗ ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْٓ اَنْظُرْ
اِلَيْكَ ۭ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَاِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهٗ فَسَوْفَ تَرٰىنِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهٗ دَكًّا وَّخَرَّ
مُوْسٰى صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّى اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
بِرِسٰلٰتِيْ وَبِكَلَامِيْ ۚ فَخُذْ مَآ اٰتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِي الْاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَّتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ ۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّ اْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا ۭ سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ سَاَصْرِفُ عَنْ اٰيٰتِيَ الَّذِيْنَ
يَتَكَبَّرُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۭ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ۚ وَاِنْ
يَّرَوْا سَبِيْلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوْهُ سَبِيْلًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ

الْاٰخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ؕ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَ اتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوْسٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا
لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ ؕ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّهٗ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَ لَا يَهْدِيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ۘ اِتَّخَذُوْهُ وَ كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَ لَمَّا سُقِطَ فِيْۤ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ رَاَوْا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ
ضَلُّوْا ۙ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَ يَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَ لَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوْسٰۤى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۙ قَالَ
بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُوْنِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ۚ اَعَجِلْتُمْ اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَ اَلْقَى الْاَلْوَاحَ وَ اَخَذَ بِرَاْسِ اَخِيْهِ يَجُرُّهٗۤ اِلَيْهِ ؕ قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ
اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِيْ وَ كَادُوْا يَقْتُلُوْنَنِيْ ۫ۖ فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْاَعْدَآءَ وَ لَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَ لِاَخِيْ
وَ اَدْخِلْنَا فِيْ رَحْمَتِكَ ۫ۖ وَ اَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَ ذِلَّةٌ فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهَا وَ اٰمَنُوْۤا ۫ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَ لَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوْسَى الْغَضَبُ اَخَذَ الْاَلْوَاحَ ۖۚ وَ فِيْ نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ
يَرْهَبُوْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَ اخْتَارَ مُوْسٰى قَوْمَهٗ سَبْعِيْنَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيْقَاتِنَا ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ اَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ
قَبْلُ وَ اِيَّايَ ؕ اَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّا ۚ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ؕ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَ تَهْدِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ اَنْتَ
وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَ ارْحَمْنَا وَ اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَ اكْتُبْ لَنَا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنَّا هُدْنَاۤ اِلَيْكَ ؕ
قَالَ عَذَابِيْۤ اُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ اَشَآءُ ۚ وَ رَحْمَتِيْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ؕ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ
بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ۚ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَ الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۫
يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَ يُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَ يَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَ الْاَغْلٰلَ
الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَ عَزَّرُوْهُ وَ نَصَرُوْهُ وَ اتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْۤ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗۤ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾
قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعَا ِۨ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَ يُمِيْتُ ۠ فَاٰمِنُوْا
بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْاُمِّيِّ الَّذِيْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ كَلِمٰتِهٖ وَ اتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰۤى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ
بِالْحَقِّ وَ بِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ وَ قَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ اَسْبَاطًا اُمَمًا ؕ وَ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰۤى اِذِ اسْتَسْقٰىهُ قَوْمُهٗۤ اَنِ اضْرِبْ
بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۚ فَانْۢبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ وَ ظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا
عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَ السَّلْوٰى ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ؕ وَ مَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَ لٰكِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَ اِذْ قِيْلَ لَهُمُ

اسْكُنُوْا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَ كُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَ قُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ وَّ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِكُمْ ؕ سَنَزِيْدُ
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ وَ سْـَٔلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ ۘ اِذْ يَعْدُوْنَ فِي السَّبْتِ اِذْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ حِيْتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ
شُرَّعًا وَّ يَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُوْنَ ۙ لَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ ۛ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۛ ۚ نَبْلُوْهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَ اِذْ قَالَتْ اُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُوْنَ قَوْمَا ۨ ۙ
اللّٰهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ اَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ؕ قَالُوْا مَعْذِرَةً اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ وَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖٓ اَنْجَيْنَا
الَّذِيْنَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوْٓءِ وَ اَخَذْنَا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا بِعَذَابٍۭ بَـِٕيْسٍۭ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَّا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ
قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُوْنُوْا قِرَدَةً خٰسِـِٕيْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَ اِذْ تَاَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ يَّسُوْمُهُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ اِنَّ
رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖۚ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٦٧﴾ وَ قَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اُمَمًا ۚ مِنْهُمُ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَ مِنْهُمْ دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۫ وَ
بَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَ السَّيِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَاْخُذُوْنَ عَرَضَ هٰذَا
الْاَدْنٰى وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّاْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ يَاْخُذُوْهُ ؕ اَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّيْثَاقُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ لَّا يَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى
اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَ دَرَسُوْا مَا فِيْهِ ؕ وَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ يُمَسِّكُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ وَ
اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَ اِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَاَنَّهٗ ظُلَّةٌ وَّ ظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهٗ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوْا مَآ
اٰتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّ اذْكُرُوْا مَا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾

Then after these, We sent Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and His chiefs, as a messenger. So, they were unjust to their souls and denied the signs. Then observe the fate of these who spread disorder. And Moses said: “O Pharaoh! I have come from the Lord of the worlds. This is what I should do and this is precisely my craving that I say to you nothing from God but the truth. I have come to you from your Lord with a clear sign; so, let the Israelites go with me.” He replied: “If you have brought a sign, present it, if you are truthful. ” At this, Moses placed his staff; then, it suddenly turned into a real serpent. And he withdrew his hand; so, it suddenly appeared dazzling to the onlookers. The chiefs of the Pharaoh’s nation said: “This person is a very adept magician ; he wants to expel you from your country; so, what is your opinion?” They said: “For now, put him off and his brother and send forth workers in every city who gather and bring to you all adept magicians.” The magicians came to the Pharaoh. They said: “If we are dominant, we shall certainly be rewarded abundantly?” The Pharaoh replied: “Yes, indeed and you shall also be included among our favoured ones.” (103-114)

The magicians said: "O Moses ! Will you present or should we present?" He said: "You present." Thus when they presented, they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them, and they brought forth a great trick. And We sent this revelation to Moses: "Put down your staff. " Then it suddenly went on engulfing the magic they had fabricated. So, the truth became evident and whatever they were doing was all ruined. Thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated. And the magicians fell down in prostration. They said: "We profess faith in the Lord of the worlds Who is the Lord of Moses and Aaron. " (115-122)

The Pharaoh said: "You people have professed faith in him without my permission? This is a conspiracy which you have hatched in the city so that you expel its inhabitants from here. So, you will soon know. I shall chop your hands and feet from alternate sides; after that shall crucify all of you." They replied: "We shall only return to our Lord. You are harming us in anger only because when the signs of our Lord came to us, we professed faith in them. Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam." (123-126)

And the chiefs of the Pharaoh 's nation said to him: "Will you leave Moses and his people in this manner to spread strife in the land and forsake you and your idols?" He said: "We shall kill their sons and let their girls live and We are fully dominant on them." Moses said to his nation: "Seek help from God and remain steadfast. The earth belongs to God. He makes whomsoever He wills from His servants to be its inheritors and success finally belongs to those who fear God." They said: "We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival." He said: "Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land to see how you behave." (127-129)

And We kept the people of the Pharaoh inflicted with famine and loss in produce so that they pay heed. So when they prospered, they would say: "This is but our share." And when some calamity struck them, they would ascribe its cause to be the ill-omen of Moses and his companions. Listen! The fate of these people is with God but most of them do not know. And they say: "Whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you." So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained . Even then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: "O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you." Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise. So, We took revenge from them and drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs and remained indifferent to them. And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed. And the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled because they remained steadfast. And We ruined all the structures the Pharaoh and his people had made and all their orchards and gardens. (130-137)

And We led the Israelites across the sea. Then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols. They said: “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also.” He said: “You are a very ignorant people. What they are involved in will be ruined and what they are doing shall be destroyed.” He said: “Should I find some other deity for you than God, even though it is He Who has granted you superiority over other nations of the world?” And recall when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh who inflicted you with great torments: they would mercilessly kill your sons and let your women live and in this there was a great trial for from your Lord. And We took a promise of thirty nights from Moses and completed it with ten further nights; so, forty nights were completed as the time appointed by his Lord. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: “Rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief - mongers.” And when Moses reached at the time appointed by Us and his Lord conversed with him, he requested: “Lord! Give me the opportunity to see you.” God said: “You shall never be able to see Me. Look, however, towards the mountain; if it stays in its place you will also be able to see Me.” Then when His Lord revealed His radiance on the mountain, He shattered it to pieces and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he regained consciousness, he said: “Exalted are you. I turn towards You I am the first of the believers.” God said: “Moses! I have given you preference among people by My message and speech. So, take whatever I have given you and be among the grateful.” And We wrote on the tablets every type of counsel and detail of everything for him. So, hold fast to them, and ask your people to follow the good way in it. I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant. I shall turn them away from My signs those who unjustly show arrogance in the land and if they see signs of all kind, even then they will not believe in them. If they see the path of guidance, they will not adopt it and if they see the path of error, they will adopt it. This is because they denied Our revelations and paid no heed to them. And wasted are the deeds of those who denied Our signs and rejected the meeting of the Hereafter. And in return, they will they receive precisely what they had been doing? (138-147)

And in the absence of Moses, his people carved out a calf from jewellery: a body from which a sound similar to that of a calf would come. Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them? They made it and were extremely unjust to themselves. And when they realized and saw that they had gone astray, they said: “If our Lord does not show mercy to us and does not pardon our mistake, we shall end up among losers.” And when Moses returned to his nation, full of anger and sorrow, he said: “You have represented me very badly in my absence. Did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” And he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head. Aaron said: “O son of my mother! These people overpowered me and almost killed me. So, do not give my and your enemies an opportunity to laugh at me and do not count me with the unjust.” Moses prayed: “My

Lord! Forgive me and my brother. Admit us into Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.” (148-151)

Indeed, those who regarded the calf as a deity will be inflicted with wrath of their Lord and with humiliation in this very world. And it is in this way that We punish those who fabricate falsehoods. However, those who did evil deeds, then repented after them and accepted faith, then after this your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.” (152-153)

And when Moses ’ anger cooled down, he picked up the tablets. And what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord. And Moses selected seventy men from his people for the time appointed by Us. Then when an earthquake seized them, Moses said: “Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier. So will you kill us for a crime perpetrated by the foolish among us? This was but a trial from You. You can lead astray through this whomsoever You wish and guide whomsoever You wish. You alone are our guardian. So, pardon us and have mercy on us, and you are the best of forgivers. And ordain what is good for us both in this world and in the Hereafter. We have turned towards You.” God said: “I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend to and My mercy encompasses everything. So, I shall ordain it for those who are pious and who keep paying *zakāh* and for those who will believe in Our revelations – who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed. (154-157)

Say: People! I am sent to all of you as a messenger of the God. The God to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity but Him. He alone gives life and death. So, profess faith in God and in His unlettered prophet, His messenger who believes in God and His words and follows Him that you may be guided. (158)

And there has always remained a group of people among the nation of Moses who guides according to the truth and passes judgement according to it. And We divided them into twelve tribes to make separate groups. And when his nation asked for water from him, We revealed to Moses: “Strike the rock with your staff. ” So, twelve springs gushed forth. Each group appointed its place to acquire water. And We made the clouds cast a shadow over them and sent down *mann* and *salwā* to them. Eat these pure things We have given you. And they did not harm Us in any way; in fact, they remained being unjust to their souls only. (159-160)

And recall when they were told: “Dwell in this city and eat in it from wherever you desire and keep asking for forgiveness and enter its gate while bowing your heads. Thus, We shall forgive your sins. We shall bless the thorough with even more favours in future.” Then those among them who were unjust to themselves changed what was said to them by other words. Thus We sent down a torment on them from the heavens because they had remained unjust to themselves. (161-162)

And ask them about the state of affairs of that settlement which was near the sea shore when they would exceed the bounds of God. On day of the Sabbath, their fish would become prominent before them with heads raised and would not come on other days. In this way, We used to test them because they would be disobedient. And recall when one of their groups said: “Why do you counsel people whom God is going to destroy or sternly punish?” They replied: “This is because it becomes from us an excuse before your Lord and so that they can be secure from God’s wrath. ” Then when they forgot the thing through which they were reminded of, We delivered those who were forbidding from evil. And those who had been unjust to themselves, We seized them in a stern punishment because they continued to be disobedient. So when with rebelliousness they continued to do precisely that from which they had been forbidden, We said to them: “Go, turn into despicable monkeys.” (163-166)

And recall when your Lord decided that until the Day of Judgement, He will keep raising against them people who would inflict them with extremely cruel punishments. Indeed, your Lord is very swift in retribution and indeed is Forgiving and Merciful. And We scattered them in the land in the form of various groups. Among them, some are pious and some otherwise also. And We tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they may take heed. Then, after them such people became inheritors of the Book of God who reap the provision of this world and say: “And we shall be forgiven for everything.” And if they are given a similar provision once again, they will grab it as well. Was not a promise taken from them about the Book that they will ascribe nothing but the truth to God? And have they even thoroughly read whatever is in it. And the Hereafter is better for those who fear God. Then do you not understand? And those who strongly hold on to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer, then We will not waste the reward of the reformers. And recall when We suspended the mountain above them as if it were a canopy and they thought that it was about to fall upon them. “Hold fast to what We have bestowed on you and remember whatever is in it so that you remain secure from God’s wrath. ” (167-171)

Explanation

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَىٰ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَإِي۟هِۦ فَظَلَمُوا۟ بِهَا ۖ فَٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾[84]

The expression “after these” refers to the messengers and their nations that are mentioned earlier from verses 59 to 92.

“Signs” here refers to the miracles shown by Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his nation as well as to the natural and logical arguments of his prophethood and the hereafter which he and Aaron (sws) presented with full clarity before the Pharaoh and his courtiers. These arguments are mentioned at various instances in the Qur’ān. I shall, God willing, explain them in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. The message of all prophets of God is based on clear signs found in human nature and intellect. Visual miracles are not among the essentials of prophethood; they are among its secondary traits. In order to conclusively convey the truth to stubborn and obdurate people, God arms His prophets with visual miracles. Since Moses (sws) was sent as a messenger to the Pharaoh and his nation, his responsibility was not merely to liberate the Israelites from their clutches but he was also given the responsibility of inviting the Pharaoh and his nation to faith. Thus it is substantiated from the Qur’ān that he fulfilled this latter responsibility even though without the desired result. Very few people professed faith in him and they also migrated with him. In the anecdote of Moses (sws) mentioned in the Torah, he has assumed the shape of a fascist national leader because of the peculiar mentality of its translators and compilers. The fact is that he was a mighty prophet and messenger. How can his message and its methodology be different from other messengers?

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[84] Then after these, We sent Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and His chiefs, as a messenger. So, they were unjust to their souls and denied the signs. Then observe the fate of these who spread disorder.

In the expression فَظَلَمُوْا بِهَا, the preposition ب evidences the fact that ظَلَمُوْا here encompasses the meaning of جحدوا (they denied) or similar words. In other words, the meaning would be: they were unjust to their souls and denied Gods revelations. The translation takes into account this linguistic style.

The anecdotes of prophets narrated earlier brought to a completion with the anecdotes of Moses (sws), the people of the Pharaoh and the Israelites. One of the reasons for this is that this anecdote was not a forgotten tale of the past; its historical record was found in the Torah even though in interpolated form and the Israelites who bore this record were right there as well. The other reason for this is that it was the Israelites from whom God took back the responsibility of the religion entrusted to them and transferred to the Ishmaelites. For this reason, every section of this anecdote has lessons to be learnt both for the Ishmaelites and the Israelites.

The real purpose of narrating this anecdote is stated in this verse as: “then observe the fate of these who spread disorder” so that the reader does not lose focus. While stating the theme of this *sūrah*, I have explained that in it the Quraysh, in the light of history, are informed that the advent of a messenger in them has placed them in God’s court of justice. If they end up denying this messenger, they will be regarded as those who spread disorder in the land and will meet the same fate such people have met. It should be kept in mind that an upright society is based on the message of a prophet. For this reason, denying and opposing him is tantamount to spreading disorder.

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى يٰفِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ حَقِيْقٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّآ اَقُوْلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ؕ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ

مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٠٥﴾[85]

The word حَقِيْقٌ is of the pattern فعيل from حَقَّ and حُقَّ and in its meaning occurs as an object (*maf‘ūl*). Thus the expressions حقيق به and هو حقيق أن يفعل كذا mean “to be worthy of something.” Here the preposition عَلٰى is used which incorporates in it the meaning of “craving,” or “to be desirous.” In the light of this, the expression would mean: I am worthy and desirous that I attribute to God only what the truth is. It is but obvious that the person who is the messenger and representative of God is someone who is the most worthy of speaking on His behalf and does not impute forgery on Him because his knowledge is not based on conjecture but directly on God’s revelation and inspiration. He is also very desirous that nothing except the truth come out of his tongue. This is because no one else can have the same fear of the extent of his accountability.

The words “clear sign” refer to the miracle of Moses’ staff and white hand with which God had sent him to the Pharaoh. It is evident from the Torah that since Moses (sws) was fully aware of his rebellious nature, he felt very anxious to bear the heavy burden of going to him at God’s behest. He told God that the Pharaoh will not to listen to him unless he shows them a clear sign that strikes awe in them. Thus God because of this special situation granted Moses (sws) miracles in the very beginning and because Moses (sws) was aware of the mentality of the Pharaoh and his courtiers, he showed them these miracles in the very first meeting. He wanted to strike at their arrogance so that they were prepared to listen to him.

Here two questions arise in the mind. Firstly, Moses (sws) did not invite the Pharaoh and his courtiers to God; instead, without any prior introduction, he asked the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go with him. Secondly, where exactly did Moses (sws) want to take the Israelites to?

The answer to the first question is that the anecdotes of prophets and their nations are narrated in the Qur’an in different *sūrahs* in a fragmentary nature keeping in view the theme of the respective *sūrah*. In each *sūrah*, only that part of an anecdote is related that is in consonance with its theme. The remaining parts are related in other *sūrahs* with respect to their themes. Thus other *sūrahs* do mention how Moses (sws) entered into a dialogue with the Pharaoh and his courtiers about monotheism and hereafter and reminded them of showing humility. This was in accordance with the general practice followed by all messengers of God. Hopefully, this will be alluded to in Sūrah Ṭāhā or at some other appropriate instance.

The answer to the second question is that the Qur’ān does not explain at any instance the place Moses (sws) wanted to take the Israelites to. It is evident from the

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[85] And Moses said: “O Pharaoh! I have come from the Lord of the worlds. This is what I should do and this is precisely my craving that I say to you nothing from God but the truth. I have come to you from your Lord with a clear sign; so, let the Israelites go with me.”

Book of Exodus of the Torah that Moses (sws) initially demanded from the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go with him for the purpose of worship. The Pharaoh flatly refused; in fact, he became very angry and ordered to increase the hours of the unpaid labour he used to exact from the Israelites. He reckoned that they have become lazy and shirk work and thus making excuses for doing worship. Then when being cornered by the miracles shown by Moses (sws), he softened his stance, he asked him about the place he wanted to take them and why does not he conduct the worship in the city. Moses (sws) replied that he wanted to take them to a place which was at a distance of three nights and that if they offer the worship of sacrifice in the city, the Copts would stone them to death. This dispute continued between Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh for quite a while. Ultimately, being disheartened by the calamities that emanated from the miracles shown by Moses (sws), his courtiers forced the Pharaoh to let Moses (sws) take the Israelites where he wanted to otherwise Egypt would be destroyed at the hands of Moses (sws). The Pharaoh finally succumbed to their pressure but once Moses (sws) set off with all the Israelites as well as with their assets and resources, he realized that he had made a mistake. As a result, he went in their pursuit with a big army to force them to return. However, he and his army were drowned in the sea.

It is evident from this that Moses (sws) had not delineated his full scheme before the Pharaoh and the courtiers. He only disclosed that he wanted to take them to a desert located at a distance of three days for the purpose of worship and animal sacrifice. The latter actually being of the cow which the Copts did not allow them – much like how Hindus in India today do not allow Muslims to slaughter a cow. Moses (sws) wanted to take them away from the environment of slavery they had become accustomed to in Egypt and organize them and revive all those religious traditions in them which had faded away in the environment of slavery in Egypt. My inference is that the place he wanted to take them was situated near Sinai where he had seen the radiant manifestation of God while returning from Madyan, and where he was blessed with the ten commandments in this journey of migration.

It is evident from the Torah that it took a long time for Moses (sws) to have this demand accepted. During this time, he, on the one hand, through miracles and intellectual arguments conclusively conveyed the truth to the Pharaoh and the Copts, and, on the other, by making the Israelites pass through various trials, made them capable enough to once again receive God’s *sharī‘ah*. In this way, in accordance with the established practice about God’s messenger, the time for his migration arrived. Thus he migrated and through this migration the way to success opened for him and his companions who had accepted faith and his enemies were inflicted with God’s punishment. This is God’s established practice about migration, as has been indicated at a number of instances in this exegesis and just as this practice manifested itself for all messengers it did so for Moses (sws) too.

Here, it is not the occasion to go into details. Those who want to know them can read my article on this topic in my anthology of essays *Tanqīdāt*. I have shown in it that this migration was in accordance with the known practice of God’s messengers and those have tried to present Moses as a nationalist leader have not understood the true meaning of his words “Send the Israelites with me.”

قَالَ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ جِئۡتَ بِاٰيَةٍ فَاۡتِ بِهَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ فَاَلۡقٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِىَ ثُعۡبَانٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۚ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ وَّنَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَاِذَا
هِىَ بَيۡضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾[86]

The Pharaoh found it quite strange that a person from his own subjects come to him and claim to be God’s messenger. He regarded himself to be the avatar of the supreme sun god and the exalted lord of his people. For this reason, he immediately asked for a sign from Moses (sws) if he was truthful in his claim. As the verses say, they were shown the miracles of the serpent and white hand by him. About miracles, God’s established practice that becomes evident is that they are given in deference to the temperament and inclinations of a nation so that they can become a conclusive argument to them.

It is evident from history that in the Egypt of those times, magic and sorcery were very rampant and magicians held a high status in the society. For this reason, the Almighty blessed Moses (sws) with miracles that would put the tricks and sorcery of the magicians to shame. In the Arabs, on the contrary, eloquence and articulacy of orators and poets held sway. For this reason, Muḥammad (sws) was given the miracle of the Qur’ān which showed the door to the eloquence of orators and poets of the time.

The attribute of مُبِيۡنٌ (manifest) for ثُعۡبَانٌ (serpent) shows that the staff actually changed into a serpent and such a manifest one that no one could doubt it. It was not a delusion in any way whatsoever. Similarly, in the expression بَيۡضَآءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيۡنَ, evident from the word نَاظِرِيۡنَ is that the shine that appeared on the hand was not a deception and if it is deeply observed and reflected upon, it would become absolutely evident that its shine was real. It may be noted that in the Arabic language, the verb نَظَرَ primarily means “to reflect and think deeply.”

Here it should be kept in mind that the distinction between magic and miracle cannot be made through a logical definition. Their real difference becomes evident through two things: firstly through mutual comparison: just as when pure gold and raw copper are placed side by side, their difference becomes evident, in a similar way the majesty of a miracle, the way of its manifestation, its dominance over evil and its potent power shows that it is not some magical trick hatched to fool its observers. The second thing is the character and conduct of the presenter. People who show tricks and magic are generally of lowly and decadent character; their base and wretched nature is proverbial. On the other hand, miracles are worked by those people who stand at the pinnacle of human attributes. They are ones from whom the world learns lessons of knowledge and wisdom and whose words and deeds becomes an example for others. They are ones who remain one hundred percent pure in the strongest of trials.

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[86] He replied: “If you have brought a sign, present it, if you are truthful. ” At this, Moses placed his staff; then, it suddenly turned into a real serpent. And he withdrew his hand; so, it suddenly appeared dazzling to the onlookers.

قَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ ۚ فَمَا ذَا تَاْمُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَرْجِهْ وَ
اَخَاهُ وَاَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ يَاْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سٰحِرٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿۱۱۲﴾[87]

These verses depict the consultation done by the courtiers among themselves after they saw the miracles worked by Moses (sws). Once they reached a final conclusion with consensus, they presented before the Pharaoh.

Here it should be kept in mind that it is not necessary that the words uttered by them be a true reflection what they felt inside. They were very well aware of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). By evaluating their past and present and their character and conduct, they could have easily come to the decision that neither was Moses (sws) a magician nor could he have any other purpose except reforming their affairs. However, this is a customary practice of those in power that when a movement of reformation is launched against them, they try to discredit it in the eyes of the common man. They try to give it a dangerous political slant. Pharaoh's courtiers did exactly the same. In order to discredit this very noble reformation endeavour of Moses (sws), they floated this false notion that he was conspiring to expel the aristocracy of the country from there.

This stunt played by the courtiers was a very effective one if the circumstances of that society are kept in mind. If the history of that period is studied from the Torah, it becomes evident that the Pharaoh and the courtiers regarded the large number of the Israelites to be a big threat to their existence. They reckoned that a stage my reach when they become so powerful that they expel all others from the land. In the book of Exodus, it is stated:

> But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them. Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were

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[87] The chiefs of the Pharaoh's nation said: "This person is a very adept magician ; he wants to expel you from your country; so, what is your opinion?" They said: "For now, put him off and his brother and send forth workers in every city who gather and bring to you all adept magicians."

> oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.” (1:7-22)

I have cited this longish excerpt to show how scared the Egyptian aristocracy was of the swelling numbers of the Israelites and their power wielded as a result. It is at precisely this time that Moses (sws) began his preaching and put forth his demand to take the Israelites away to a desert at a distance of three days to celebrate the *‘īd* of sacrifice. In these circumstances, nothing better a plan could have been hatched by the courtiers to scare their people from Moses’ message than saying that he is trying to organize his people in order to drive out the original inhabitants from there.

The verses depict the well-thought of opinion of the courtiers to the Pharaoh. Their implication was that things should not be done in a hurry and must be planned as stated and to combat Moses (sws), ordinary magicians should not be employed.

Consider the words: اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ. The word اَرْجِهْ is actually أرجئه. Such changes in the form of a word often occur in the Arabic language to lighten it.

وَجَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَاِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ [88]

Here the Qur’ān, in accordance with its conventional style, has suppressed a part of the anecdote: in deference to the suggestion of the courtiers, the Pharaoh sent his workers to all parts of his dominion to gather and bring forth adept magicians. Since this part of the account was self-evident, it was not mentioned in words.

As soon as these magicians arrived, like the way of professionals, they expressed their desire for a reward in a cajoling style. The Qur’ān has specially mentioned this here to show how lowly these magicians were in their character. Then later it has shown how these magicians turned into directly the opposite direction: they did not even care for their lives after they accepted faith what to speak of their greed for wealth. They openly said in response to the threat of the Pharaoh stated later that they were prepared to sacrifice their lives.

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[88] The magicians came to the Pharaoh. They said: “If we are dominant, we shall certainly be rewarded abundantly?” The Pharaoh replied: “Yes, indeed and you shall also be included among our favoured ones.”

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰۤى اِمَّاۤ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَ اِمَّاۤ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالَ اَلْقُوْا ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْۤا اَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَ اسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَ
جَآءُوْ بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ [89]

The opportunity offered by Moses (sws) to the magicians to go first shows the confidence he had in God. He knew that with His help, he would be able to defeat whatever spell they weave.

Here the Qur’ān has clarified the nature of magic by the words: “they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them.” it does not change the form of a thing. It only influences the eye and the faculty of imagination of the onlookers. As a result, they begin to see what the magician wants them to see.

When magicians want to display their skill to people they usually throw something like the arrows of gambling before them and show their magic to them. That is why the word اِلْقَاء is used in the verse.

وَ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰۤى اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۚ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَ بَطَلَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَغُلِبُوْا
هُنَالِكَ وَ انْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَ اُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ [90]

The word لقف means to hurriedly gulp something and أفك means to say something contrary to the truth. It has just been explained that magic does not change the shape or form of a thing; it only deludes the vision of the onlookers. It is merely a deception. On the other hand, a miracle refers to an actual happening.

This is exactly the same as if the sun comes out to dispel a false moon. It is obvious that in the presence of the real sun the shine of thousands of artificial suns and moons will vanish. Thus, this is what actually happened. As soon as the miracles of Moses (sws) appeared, the spell cast by the magicians vanished. It has been stated earlier that the real difference between magic and miracle becomes evident from the actual contest: falsehood vanishes and the truth necessarily prevails.

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[89] The magicians said: “O Moses ! Will you present or should we present?” He said: “You present.” Thus when they presented, they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them, and they brought forth a great trick.

[90] And We sent this revelation to Moses: “Put down your staff. ” Then it suddenly went on engulfing the magic they had fabricated. So, the truth became evident and whatever they were doing was all ruined. Thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated. And the magicians fell down in prostration. They said: “We profess faith in the Lord of the worlds Who is the Lord of Moses and Aaron. ”

The words “thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated” do not merely relate to the magicians. Included in them is the Pharaoh and all his followers. At another instance in the Qur’ān (20:59), it is pointed out this contest was held in an open ground on the occasion of a festival and the Pharaoh had arranged for a large audience so that his triumph is widely applauded. However, he faced utter humiliation.

In the sentence وَاُلْقِیَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِیْنَ, the verb اُلْقِیَ occurs in the passive. It expresses the sentiments of respect and veneration of the magicians. Honouring something through prostration was a common practice among Egyptians, Arabs and the Israelites and on most occasions took the form of kneeling, the way it is done in the prayer.

It is evident from this that magicians are the most capable to distinguish between magic and miracle provided they have the courage to acknowledge the truth. A magician knows the limitations of his knowledge and the extent of his trick. Thus as soon as he encounters a miracle, he immediately comes to know that this something beyond his skill. The magicians of the Pharaoh too acknowledged their helplessness and Moses’ (sws) superiority forthwith and bowed their heads in his respect.

The magicians did not merely express their acknowledgement: they went on to openly profess faith in God in very strong words. This was an open rejection of the Pharaoh’s divinity. Who can imagine the affect of this declaration on the audience that had gathered and how humiliated the Pharaoh and his courtiers would be. Here it needs to be kept in mind that even though these magicians had the lowly traits referred to above, yet some semblance of liking for the truth still remained in them. Thus it is evident from verse 73 of Sūrah Ṭāhā that they did not come willingly; they had been forced to come: مَآ اَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَیْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ (the magic you have forced us to). It may well be that they already know that Moses (sws) was not a magician nor what he would present was of the category of magic. For this reason, they wanted to evade any contest with him and it was only under compulsion from the Pharaoh and his workers that came. If this inference is true, it would mean that the liking for the truth was latently found in them and it came to the surface when they saw the miracles worked by Moses (sws). If even an iota of such a spark is found in a person, it is ignited with God’s graciousness.

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكَرْتُمُوْهُ فِی الْمَدِیْنَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوْا مِنْهَاۤ اَهْلَهَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾
لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَیْدِیَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِیْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾[91]

This was a very precarious instant. The Pharaoh and his courtiers – in fact, the

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[91] The Pharaoh said: “You people have professed faith in him without my permission? This is a conspiracy which you have hatched in the city so that you expel its inhabitants from here. So, you will soon know. I shall chop your hands and feet from alternate sides; after that shall crucify all of you.”

whole nation stood disgraced. Yet the Pharaoh was a very clever person. To turn the tide in his own favour, he floated the notion that these magicians had connived with Moses (sws) and both were partners in the scheme to expel them from the land. They contended that the magicians had already discussed with Moses (sws) that they would concede defeat right in the contest and declare acceptance of faith; in this way, Moses (sws) would prevail on the hearts of the people and together with the magicians they would be able to dislodge the current regime. Thus the Pharaoh announced to punish them in the way criminals guilty of conspiracy and rebellion are punished, as per the law of the land.

It is evident from the Pharaoh’s words “you people have professed faith in him without my permission?” that there was no religious freedom in his kingdom, and how can it possibly exist when the king regards himself to be the supreme God. In this situation, anyone who accepted someone other than him as god, should necessarily be regarded as a rebel.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اِلٰی رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾ وَ مَا تَنْقِمُ مِنَّآ اِلَّآ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَآءَتْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَّ تَوَفَّنَا
مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾[92]

The verse depicts the fruit of faith in God. These are the same magicians whose meanness and faintheartedness was such that just a few minutes before, for displaying their skill, they requested for a handsome reward from the Pharaoh like jesters and mimickers. And now as soon as faith entered their hearts, every portion of their inner self started to dazzle in such a manner that it seems that darkness never enveloped their hearts and that they are not ordinary mortals but are actually paragons of steadfastness and determination and as noble and pure as the angels. One can see how big a threat the Pharaoh sounded; but their answer was that they are not the slightest bothered if the Pharaoh has their hands and feet severed and crucifies them as this will only take them to God. They challenged the Pharaoh to do whatever he likes since his wrath on them is because of their crime of believing in their Lords signs when they have come to them. If this was the punishment of this crime, they welcome it.

If one deliberates on the this change of heart of the magicians, it becomes evident that if a person is devoid of faith, there is none more despicable than him and if he has the treasure of faith in his heart, there is none more exalted than him.

The prayer of the magicians: “Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam” is a request for strength. They meant that they have declared their faith if the Pharaoh has declared the punishments he wants to give them. They trust God.

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[92] They replied: “We shall only return to our Lord. You are harming us in anger only because when the signs of our Lord came to us, we professed faith in them. Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam.”

وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ اَتَذَرُ مُوْسٰى وَقَوْمَهٗ لِيُفْسِدُوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَاٰلِهَتَكَ ؕ قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْیٖ نِسَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَاِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قٰهِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾[93]

Moses’ (sws) victory in this open contest had totally routed the senses of the Pharaoh and his courtiers. So they came up with the scheme mentioned in the verses and thought that they can still have their way. This scheme has already been mentioned earlier. It had been adopted to check the increase in number of the Israelites and to prevent them from becoming a danger for the aristocracy. In the beginning, this scheme did not succeed because of non-cooperation from the wet nurses. However, the Pharaoh did no lose hope; he, in fact, took a step ahead: he ordered the masses to throw the children of the Israelites into the sea. In the last verse, the Qur’ān has indicated that the Pharaoh expressed his resolve that he will not let them become a threat and if needed reinforce further this scheme.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that though the Pharaoh and his followers were afraid of the Israelites to this extent, yet they were not prepared at any cost that they leave the country. The reason for this was that all the prosperity of Egypt depended on these slaves. From preparing dung for fire to cultivation to construction – everything owed itself to their hard work. The Pharaoh and his followers lived a life of luxury because of them. They governed them and forced them to unpaid labour. Obviously, in these circumstances they could not have allowed them to become educated and develop nor was it possible to let them leave Egypt at once. In order to remain secure from this two-pronged danger, the Pharaoh and his followers hatched this scheme. When a person crosses his bounds and interferes in the bounds of God, he loses his senses in this way.

Our exegetes have faced great difficulty in interpreting the words “will you leave Moses and your idols?” It seems from these words that there were some idols and deities whom even the Pharaoh himself worshipped. If this is correct, then what does his claim of being the supreme god mean?

The answer to this question is that the Pharaoh regarded himself to be the avatar of the Sun god, who was the greatest god among the Egyptians. In this way, he regarded himself to be the God-king. In other words, he was simultaneously the king of the Egyptians and also the manifestation of their greatest god and as such was their supreme god. He had carved out many statues of himself and had them placed at various places in the country. His subjects would prostrate before them. In this way, the king had both divine and royal rights over his subjects. The words “your idols” actually refer to these statues which represented his self. Remnants of the ancient temples of Egypt verify this.

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93. And the chiefs of the Pharaoh ’s nation said to him: “Will you leave Moses and his people in this manner to spread strife in the land and forsake you and your idols?” He said: “We shall kill their sons and let their girls live and We are fully dominant on them.”

قَالَ مُوْسٰی لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِیْنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ اصْبِرُوْا ۚ اِنَّ الْاَرْضَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ۬ یُوْرِثُهَا مَنْ یَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَ الْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ قَالُوْۤا اُوْذِیْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِیَنَا وَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا ؕ قَالَ عَسٰی رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ یُّهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَ یَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَیَنْظُرَ كَیْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾[94]

In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have explained the importance of patience and the prayer in the cause of establishing God’s religion in the society. In reality, these two resources in this struggle can lead to victory. At every instance in the Qur’ān, it is these two weapons that are referred to as a means of procuring help through. Though the word God is used here (seek help from God), it actually alludes to the prayer. This is because it is through the prayer that help can be sought from God. It was but natural for the Israelites to feel worried when after being victorious over the Pharaoh the latter expressed his opinion to destroy their race. It is very difficult to remain steadfast during trials and tribulations. It is not possible without God’s help. The Qur’ān mentions this fact in the following words in verse 127 of Sūrah al-Naḥl: وَمَا صَبْرُكَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (you can only acquire patience through God’s help). This means asking for God’s help is the prayer. In fact, it also refers to that special prayer to which the Prophet (sws) and his companions were directed to in the early part of the Makkan period that was replete with trials and difficulties. It is precisely this which Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) were directed to as well. I will explain this further under verse 87 of Sūrah Yūnus.

The words “The earth belongs to God” are meant to negate the arrogance showed by the Pharaoh earlier in verse 127 in the words “We are fully dominant on them.” The implication is that however much he may claim to be powerful, the earth belongs to God. About the messengers, it has been explained at several instances in this exegesis that as per God’s established practice they are necessarily made to dominate their enemies whether it takes place in their lives or after them by their followers and also regardless of the fact whether they occupy the land in which a messenger began his preaching or God directs them to migrate from that place and chooses some other piece of land to establish them there. Thus Moses (sws) achieved this dominance in his life – in fact, soon after the incidents alluded to earlier took place but his *ummah* was given the land of Palestine and this happened after he passed away. Here this also needs to be understood that after the punishment that visited the Pharaoh and his people, all of Egypt’s aristocracy was destroyed and was replaced by others who had different families and traditions. The former rulers had political rivalries with them too and the Pharaoh and his followers feared that by joining hands with the Israelites, they would expel them from the land and become its rulers. Since this is an historical issue and does not directly relate to us, I will content myself to these short hints. Those who are interested in more details should look up books of history.

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[94] Moses said to his nation: “Seek help from God and remain steadfast. The earth belongs to God. He makes whomsoever He wills from His servants to be its inheritors and success finally belongs to those who fear God.” They said: “We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival.” He said: “Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land to see how you behave.”

Because of the lack of conviction in the Israelites and their weak faith, this advice by Moses (sws) had no effect on them. They said: “We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival.” In other words, they contended that when such are the circumstances and events, who can trust his promises and childish assurances; instead of becoming a boon for them, he has become bane for them. It has been indicated earlier by referring to the Torah that the aristocracy of Egypt had become very worried at the ever-increasing numbers of the Israelites and had launched a heinous campaign to racially exterminate them. Later, when Moses (sws) began a movement to organize and reform them, this worry increased. They reckoned that the Israelites now have a powerful leader and soon they will displace them by becoming an organized force. Overcome by this worry, on the one hand the Pharaoh ordered to enhance the intensity of the campaign of racial extermination, and on the other, he asked his administrators and heads to increase the extent of unpaid labour that was being exacted from the Israelites. The stuff that was given to them to make bricks was to be stopped and they were to be directed to produce this stuff by their own hands. At the same time, each of them must be asked to make the same number of bricks he was formerly making. In this way, the yoke of oppression that was already very tight around their necks was further tightened after Moses (sws). The Israelites credited Moses (sws) with all these bothers.

In order to assure the Israelites, Moses (sws) once again assured them by words: “Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land.” Land here does not refer to the land of Egypt; it actually refers to Palestine, as has been explained in verse 137 later: وَ اَوۡرَثۡنَا الۡقَوۡمَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَانُوۡا يُسۡتَضۡعَفُوۡنَ مَشَارِقَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِيۡ بٰرَكۡنَا فِيۡهَا.[95] It is obvious that the words “We had blessed” refer to it. It is evident from the words of this verse that by giving them the rule of this land, the Almighty fulfilled His promise the verse under discussion mentions through the tongue of Moses (sws).

The words “to see how you behave” is reminder to them of the purpose of granting this political authority: when God destroys a nation and makes another rise, it is merely to see the attitude it adopts after being given political authority: whether it also behaves in a rash way like the previous nation or duly fulfils its obligation this position entails. If it also follows the same path, it will also be destroyed by God after being given some time of respite. He then replaces it by another and puts it to the same test. This cycle of test is continuing and as long as this world exists, it too will continue. For this reason, no nation should be misled to think that once it has found favour with God, it will continue in this manner howevermuch its beliefs and deeds become wavered.

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[95] And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed.

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِيْنَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾[96]

The word سِّنِيْنَ is the plural of سَنَةٌ and generally means “years”; however, it is also used for “years of famine and difficulty.” It is used here in this sense.

Earlier in verse 94-95, it has been explained that when God sends a messenger, then as per His established practice, He creates various corroborations of his message in the form of different trials so that people awaken from their slumber, learn a lesson and turn to God. It is to this established practice that this verse refers.

فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰى وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّمَا طٰٓئِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَقَالُوْا مَهْمَا تَاْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ۙ فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾[97]

The word تطیرis fromطیر and the latter means “birds.” Since superstitious people used the flight of birds to try to find out good or bad fortunes, the word تطیر began being used in this meaning. Then it began being dominantly used to find out bad fortunes and omens. From the same root is the word طائر which is used for the object from which good or bad fortunes are found out. Then it further developed in meaning from this and came to be used for “share” and “fate.”

The verses state that the trials sent by God to shake and jolt the Pharaoh and his people and to make them turn to the message of Moses (sws) were regarded by them to be the ill-effects and ill-omens of Moses (sws).

The words “whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you” depict their final answer.

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوْفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ ۟ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ هُمْ بٰلِغُوْهُ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾[98]

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[96] And We kept the people of the Pharaoh inflicted with famine and loss in produce so that they pay heed.

[97] So when they prospered, they would say: “This is but our share.” And when some calamity struck them, they would ascribe its cause to be the ill-omen of Moses and his companions. Listen! The fate of these people is with God but most of them do not know. And they say: “Whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you.”

[98] So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained . Even

As indicated earlier, the trials mentioned in verse 137 manifest themselves as a result of God’s established practice regarding His messengers. They are meant to reinforce their message and. as a consequence of God’s mercy, to induce people to pay heed. However, when the Pharaoh and his people were not effected by them, God showed them some very significant miracles at the hand of Moses (sws) that are referred to here in these verses. I will present their details in the light of the Torah:

> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on people and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.” When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. (Exodus, 9:22-25)

It is evident from this that this storm consisted of thunder and lightning. Rain and tempestuous winds also generally accompany it. The fire mentioned in it is a mistake on the part of the translators of the Torah. It actually refers to the lightning which is a consequence of such storms.

The onslaught of the locusts is mentioned thus in the Torah:

> And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous *were they;* before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. (Exodus, 10:12-15)

The details of the lice attack are stated thus:

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then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: “O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you.” Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise.

> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.” They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came on people and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. (Exodus, 10:16-17)

The torment of the frogs is related thus:

> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs on your whole country. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will come up on you and your people and all your officials.’” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’” So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. (Exodus, 8:1-6)

The way the torment of the blood manifested itself is mentioned thus:

> The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.’ Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone. Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. (Exodus, 7:19-21)

The expression اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ occurs as an accusative of state (*ḥāl*), and occasion and context evidence that the locus (*ẓarf*) of مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ is suppressed ie. their details have been mentioned in the scriptures of the Israelites. Thus it is a fact that not only these but other similar miracles are also comprehensively mentioned in the Torah up to their minute details. Since the Qur’ān has just referred to them, I have cited these excerpts from the Bible.

It is stated that instead of showing humility, these people became arrogant and the reason for this is that these people are wrongdoers and God does not let such people have their way. Such signs instead of guiding them only become a source of hardening their hearts and of conclusive communication to them.

In the expression لَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ, the word لَمَّا means كُلَّمَا. The purpose is to portray the situation. An example of this usage can be seen in verse 189 ahead.

The implication is that when they a torment would visit them, they would plead before Moses (sws) to intercede before his Lord because of the position of favour he has in His eyes. If this happens, they will definitely accept his demand and let the Israelites go with him. However, if the torment would be delayed, they would once again break their promise.

This breach is mentioned thus in the Torah:

> Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD." (Exodus, 8:8)
>
> Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me."
>
> But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go. (Exodus, 8:28-32)

The meaning of the expression بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ in my opinion is that since God listens to Moses (sws) and accepts his requests, so pray to him for us.

The words "then if for some period, which they had to reach" are meant to point towards their lack of conscience and wretched nature: even though they knew that they would not be able to hide their falsehood and deception for long, they would make a false promise just to earn its benefits for as long as possible.

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ كَانُوْا عَنْهَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۶﴾ وَ اَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا يُسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ مَشَارِقَ الْاَرْضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَ تَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنٰى عَلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ۬ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَ دَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَ قَوْمُهٗ وَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۷﴾[99]

"Revenge" here means revenge for their crimes to which they staunchly adhered even after the truth had become conclusively evident to them. In the first place, they remained indifferent to the signs of God and when they manifested themselves with an open challenge before them, they rejected them: they said that these were not from

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[99] So, We took revenge from them and drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs and remained indifferent to them. And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed. And the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled because they remained steadfast. And We ruined all the structures the Pharaoh and his people had made and all their orchards and gardens.

God and were a product of magic and trickery. In retribution for this, they were drowned in the sea.

The words “and those who had been oppressed” refer to the severe bouts of oppression and persecution faced by the Israelites at the hands of the Pharaoh and his people and some of which have already been alluded to earlier. The Almighty took them out from these horrific cruelties and gave the land of Palestine under their control. The word إيراث is used here to connote that they were given this land. This means that God dislodged its former rulers and made the Israelites its heirs. The words “that land We had blessed” are very evidently spoken for Palestine because this is the only land which has been mentioned in the Qur’ān with this attribute. Secondly, these words refer to both material and spiritual blessings of the land. This is because the Arabic word مبارك includes both.

The words مَشَارِقَ and مَغَارِبَ refer to the vastness of the land. Sometimes, a plural occurs in Arabic to connote vastness and extensiveness of something. Earlier the word أعراف has also been used such, as already discussed.

The words “and the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled” refer to the promise mentioned earlier in verses 128-129. The implication is that the promise made by God with the forefathers of the Israelites and which was finally revived through Moses (sws) was fulfilled.

The words “because they remained steadfast” refer to the fact that God shows His favours to nations because of their character and conduct. Their lineage has no role in this.

Two expressions are used here: مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ and وَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْرِشُوْنَ. In my opinion, the first refers to buildings and the other to orchards. The Pharaoh mentioned here had a special interest in construction and it was to make structures and building that the Israelites were forced to work without being paid. Of the expressions mentioned above, the latter specifically relates to orchards of grapes because it was their wines that would be made to spread on vertical structures. Thus in the Qur’ān (6:141), the expression جنات معروشات exists. However, at times, something is named after its dominant element. Though the words used are specific yet their connotation is general. In those times, Egypt was very prominent in the production of grapes. Some instances in Sūrah Yūsuf also indicate this.

Also evident from this is that the nation of the Pharaoh, besides being drowned, was visited by other forms of destruction as well: their cities and orchards were totally ravaged. It has been mentioned earlier that their orchards were already destroyed by hail and locusts. It seems that during this time an earthquake also came and razed their buildings to the ground. Thus whatever remained intact from previous calamities was also destroyed.

وَ جٰوَزۡنَا بِبَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ الۡبَحۡرَ فَاَتَوۡا عَلٰی قَوۡمٍ یَّعۡکُفُوۡنَ عَلٰۤی اَصۡنَامٍ لَّہُمۡ ۚ قَالُوۡا یٰمُوۡسَی اجۡعَلۡ لَّنَاۤ اِلٰـہًا کَمَا لَہُمۡ اٰلِـہَۃٌ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّکُمۡ قَوۡمٌ تَجۡہَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳۸﴾ اِنَّ ہٰۤؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا ہُمۡ فِیۡہِ وَ بٰطِلٌ مَّا کَانُوۡا یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳۹﴾ قَالَ اَغَیۡرَ اللّٰہِ اَبۡغِیۡکُمۡ اِلٰـہًا وَّ ہُوَ فَضَّلَکُمۡ عَلَی الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۴۰﴾[100]

The eloquence found in “and We led the Israelites across the sea” as well as the favour of God, has been explained in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Until here that part of the history of the Israelites has been narrated that related to Egypt and the Pharaoh. Evident in it are manifestations of God’s splendour and majesty, the way the Israelites were divinely helped and the way the Pharaoh and his nation was destroyed. Viewed thus, this anecdote becomes the supplement to the anecdotes mentioned earlier. From here on that part of the history of the Israelites is narrated that relates to the time following their exodus from Egypt and crossing the sea. It will become apparent from this part of their history how the Almighty helped and guided them at every step but they continued to show ingratitude at every step and stumbled.

The word “nation” in “then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols” refers to a nation from other ones that the Israelites encountered when they had crossed the sea. All of these nations were idol-worshippers. The expression یَعۡکُفُوۡنَ عَلٰۤی اَصۡنَامٍ has an element of derision in it. It means that these people were so foolish and silly that they had stuck to idols they themselves had carved out while leaving aside the merciful and gracious God. They would fervently worship them. When the verb عَکَفَ occurs with the preposition عَلٰی the meaning of strongly adhering to something is incorporated in it.

It is evident from the words “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also” that the Israelites proved sillier than that nation. They show that their long period of servitude in Egypt had made their minds so stale and decadent that even after seeing so many sings of God’s majesty and splendour they still remained enamoured with the desolate darkness of Egypt. It is not easy to let go of old traditions. It is perhaps because of this reason that after the conquest of Makkah the Prophet (sws) forthwith destroyed all signs of polytheism there so that they do not become a trial for those of weak and raw faith. Moses’ (sws) response stated in this verse points to the extreme ingratitude of the Israelites.

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[100] And We led the Israelites across the sea. Then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols. They said: “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also.” He said: “You are a very ignorant people. What they are involved in will be ruined and what they are doing shall be destroyed.” He said: “Should I find some other deity for you than God, even though it is He Who has granted you superiority over other nations of the world?”

وَ اِذۡ اَنۡجَيۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ يَسُوۡمُوۡنَكُمۡ سُوۡٓءَ الۡعَذَابِ ۚ يُقَتِّلُوۡنَ اَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ وَ يَسۡتَحۡيُوۡنَ نِسَآءَكُمۡ ؕ وَ فِيۡ ذٰلِكُمۡ بَلَآءٌ مِّنۡ
رَّبِّكُمۡ عَظِيۡمٌ ﴿١٤١﴾[101]

The explanation of this verse has been mentioned in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as well as earlier in this *sūrah* too. However, what is specific to this verse is that from here until verse 147, the elaborate arrangement the Almighty made to guide the Israelites through His *sharī‘ah* is referred to. Yet the response shown to this by the Israelites was that as soon as Moses (sws) went to Sinai to receive God's *sharī‘ah*, in spite of all his counsels and in spite of the efforts of his brother Aaron (sws), they carved out a deity they had demanded from Moses (sws). It is known that he had admonsihed them on this, as mentioned earlier. The purpose of relating all these details is to show that what a nation – who is very proud of its status today – did earlier on in the presence of its messenger even after witnessing grand miracles.

وَ وٰعَدۡنَا مُوۡسٰى ثَلٰثِيۡنَ لَيۡلَةً وَّ اَتۡمَمۡنٰهَا بِعَشۡرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيۡقَاتُ رَبِّهٖۤ اَرۡبَعِيۡنَ لَيۡلَةً ۚ وَ قَالَ مُوۡسٰى لِاَخِيۡهِ هٰرُوۡنَ اخۡلُفۡنِيۡ فِيۡ
قَوۡمِيۡ وَ اَصۡلِحۡ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعۡ سَبِيۡلَ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾[102]

This verse mentions the elaborate arrangement made by God to give His *sharī‘ah* to Moses (sws). He was asked to appear at a specific location on mount Sinai and stay there for thirty days. It is mentioned in verse 84 of Sūrah Ṭāhā that he reached that place well before the appointed time. Even though this haste shown by him was to seek God's pleasure, he was checked by God for it and His wisdom entailed that this period be increased from 30 days to 40. It may be noted that the nature of blemish of a prophet does not relate to he succumbing to base desires; rather it is committed by him while crossing the bounds in trying to seek God's pleasure. As a result, they are stopped by God because they are the barometer of justice and this barometer must be precise in every respect.

The words "rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief -mongers" refer to the arrangement made by Moses (sws) for his period of absence by delegating his authority to Aaron (sws). It is evident from the last part of this sentence that Moses (sws) was aware of the mischief-mongers present in his nation and because of their former pranks he also feared them.

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[101] And recall when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh who inflicted you with great torments: they would mercilessly kill your sons and let your women live and in this there was a great trial for from your Lord.

[102] And We took a promise of thirty nights from Moses and completed it with ten further nights; so, forty nights were completed as the time appointed by his Lord. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: "Rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief -mongers."

So he specially directed Aaron (sws) in their matter. The purpose of mentioning this is to show that the Israelites indulged in the heinous act of worshipping the calf inspite of all this arrangement.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوْسٰى لِمِيْقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهٗ رَبُّهٗ ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْٓ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ ۭ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ وَلٰكِنِ انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَاِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهٗ فَسَوْفَ تَرٰىنِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهٗ دَكًّا وَّخَرَّ مُوْسٰى صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۳﴾[103]

The word مِيْقَات means “prescribed time.” Here it refers to that time which the Almighty had fixed to converse with Moses (sws).

Instead of rebuking Moses (sws) on his demand, the Almighty explained to him why it ccould not be fulfilled. The Almighty revealed Himself in this manner to assure Moses (sws) that even mountains are not able to bear the vision of God – mountains which are the most solid and firm structures of this earth; so how can man who is so feeble an entity before these mountains bear this vision? A human being has a limited power of tolerance. His eyes can see light; however, if the intensity of this light exceeds a certain limit his eyes are dazed by it and at times he even loses his sight. Similarly, his ears are able to hear sounds; however, his ears can only hear to a certain extent. If the roar of thunder, for example, exceeds a limit it can shatter his ear-drums. The sun is an essential requirement of man; however, its light and heat are only beneficial to him if the sun remains at a certain distance from him and passes on its light and warmth through many layers and filters of the atmosphere. If some day, the sun comes a little near to the earth, all life forms will be burnt down. So when human beings are such a feeble entity how can they have the strength and ability to see the pure and untainted being of the Almighty who is absolute light and is beyond and above this universe and what is going on in it?

The expression دك الحائط means “to raze down a wall and level it with the ground.” Here the word “mountain” does not refer to its complete structure. It only refers to a part of it or to its peak where God’s radiance menifested itself. Referring to a part of something while referring to its whole is common in every language. It may be kept in mind that this radiance would have been only be a manifestation of God’s being; however, even a stable structure as a mountain could not bear this.

God showed His radiance to Moses (sws) as a remedy for an intellectual ailment with which the Israelites were suffering. It is mentioned at a number of instances in the Torah that the Israelites asked Moses (sws) to make them see God. They contended that when God talks to him directly, why cannot He talk to them face to face because His splendour and majesty they have hitherto seen have not been sufficient for them to satisfy their hearts; who can be convinced of an unseen God? It has been cited earlier that they had asked Moses (sws) to make for them a deity. This actually reflects their desire to see God as an observable reality. In order provide a remedy for this ailment of servitude to what can be seen, Moses (sws) was told and shown in the very first phase that God cannot be seen by eyes or touched by hands. He can only be understood by the intellect and accepted by the heart. Eyes can only see the manifestion of His attributes and do not have any access beyond it. Moses (sws) taught all this to the Israelites but this desire did not leave them. Thus because of it he too had to face God’s anger as mentioned earlier and shall also be mentioned later.

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[103] And when Moses reached at the time appointed by Us and his Lord conversed with him, he requested: “Lord! Give me the opportunity to see you.” God said: “You shall never be able to see Me. Look, however, towards the mountain; if it stays in its place you will also be able to see Me.” Then when His Lord revealed His radiance on the mountain, He shattered it to pieces and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he regained consciousness, he said: “Exalted are you. I turn towards You I am the first of the believers.”

It is evident from this discussion that yogis and sufis who regard observing God as the highest form of comprehending Him and have made this their objective, they have crossed the stipulated bounds and this will lead to nothing substantive. This is tantamount to a fly hunting for an eagle. I shall explain in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Najm that even Gabriel who has the most proximity with God cannot go beyond a certain limit. It was from a distanee that he accesses God’s commands and taking any step further would only burn his wings.

قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّى اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسٰلٰتِىْ وَبِكَلَامِىْ ۖ فَخُذْ مَآ اٰتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۴﴾[104]

The implication of being thankful to God is that Moses (sws) should fulfil his obligations towards the words of God by duly valuing them, asking others to value them and teaching them their message. A very subtle insinuation found in this verse is that whatever has been given to Moses (sws) is quite sufficient for him. He should be content with it and not deman seeing God.

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِى الْاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَّتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍ ۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا ۗ سَاُورِيْكُمْ
دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۵﴾[105]

Whether God wrote down on the tablets Himself or had them written, both cases are mentioned in the Torah:

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD’s words and laws, they

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[104] God said: “Moses! I have given you preference among people by My message and speech. So, take whatever I have given you and be among the grateful.”

[105] And We wrote on the tablets every type of counsel and detail of everything for him. So, hold fast to them, and ask your people to follow the good way in it. I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant.

> responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. (Exodus, 24:3-4)

At another instance, it is said:

> Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. (Exodus, 32:15-16)

Both interpretations are possible viz. the viz. the Qur'ān and primarily there is no difference between the two: if Moses (sws) wrote at God's behest, it is as if God Himself wrote. If a bridge is constructed by an engineer at the behest of a ruler, it is equally correct to say that the ruler made it. The arrangement of preserving the Qur'ān took place through the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, since it was done at God's directive, it has been stated in the Qur'ān (15:9) that God has preserved and protected it.

The words of the verse under discussion point to the elaborate arrangement made by God in giving His *sharī‘ah* to the Israelites. The Prophets who came before Moses (sws) taught their nations orally but for the Israelites written instruction was employed. Moses (sws) did not teach them merely through his words and deeds, he also taught them by writing out God's instructions for them so that they were able to have them in secure form. Alas! The details of the way they valued this elaborate arrangement can be seen in Sūrah al-Baqarah and more are coming up.

When the words مِنۡ كُلِّ شَیۡءٍ and لِكُلِّ شَیۡءٍ occurs in such a context, they relate to the topic that is being discussed and do not have a general connotation. In other words, whatever from among religion was needed to be communicated was done so. At the same time, details of directives related to communal organization were also written down. It has been generally understood that only the ten famous commandments were inscribed in the tablets. However, this does not seem to be true. The excepts cited earlier from the book of Exodus show that there were two tablets and both were fully written on from both sides. Moreover, at these instances in the Torah, there are several other details related to collective organization and such is their nature that it was essential for the Israelites to be informed of them at such an occasion.

Moreover, what is further worthy of note is that the Qur'ān like the Torah has not mentioned two tablets. It as used the word "tablets" which is a plural and in Arabic it refers to things that are more than two in number.

The words "so, hold fast to them" counsel Moses (sws) to follow these instructions in all circumstances with full force and also direct his nation to do so instead of asking to make deity for them by following the footsteps of other nations. They must not follow their way. In fact, they should follow the good way written in these tablets.

The superlative tense in يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحۡسَنِهَا is used in its absolute meaning and these words occur in contrast to the ways of the idolatrous people which the Israelites met after crossing the river, as indicated in verse 138 earlier. In other words, it is not a comparison between what is written and they are not told that they should adopt what is good among them – for all of the written directives were equally good. The implication is that the Israelites should be told to not be lured by the foolish acts of the idol worshipping nations; on the contrary, they should follow the good and noble way which these tablets guide them to. The superlative tense is used in this meaning at other instances in the Qur'ān too. For example, in verse 55 of Sūrah al-Zumar.

The words "I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant" point to why God's directives should be strongly adhered to: soon they will pass by the lands and abodes of the defiant and encounter them. These teachings will help them in dealing with these people and through them they will triumph. If they do not stick to them, there is a strong chance that they will be misled at every step.

سَاَصۡرِفُ عَنۡ اٰيٰتِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَكَبَّرُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ بِغَيۡرِ الۡحَقِّ ؕ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِهَا ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا سَبِيۡلَ الرُّشۡدِ لَا
يَتَّخِذُوۡهُ سَبِيۡلًا ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا سَبِيۡلَ الۡغَىِّ يَتَّخِذُوۡهُ سَبِيۡلًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوۡا عَنۡهَا غٰفِلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۴۶﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ
كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ حَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ ؕ هَلۡ يُجۡزَوۡنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴۷﴾[106]

These verses sound a comprehensive warning show which people will duly value these teachings and those who would turn away from them.

وَاتَّخَذَ قَوۡمُ مُوۡسٰى مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ مِنۡ حُلِيِّهِمۡ عِجۡلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ ؕ اَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اَنَّهٗ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمۡ وَلَا يَهۡدِيۡهِمۡ سَبِيۡلًا ۘ اِتَّخَذُوۡهُ وَ
كَانُوۡا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۴۸﴾[107]

Such was the ingratitude shown by the Israelites to the arrangement of guidance made for them by the Almighty that after Moses' (sws) departure, they became involved in calf-worship.

It is evident from the Torah that in order to make the statue of calf, they donated their jewelery. From them, it was carved out. The mechanism employed was that when wind would pass through it, the sound of bellowing would come out of it. The word خُوَارٌ refers to the sound made by an ox.

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[106] I shall turn them away from My signs those who unjustly show arrogance in the land and if they see signs of all kind, even then they will not believe in them. If they see the path of guidance, they will not adopt it and if they see the path of error, they will adopt it. This is because they denied Our revelations and paid no heed to them. And wasted are the deeds of those who denied Our signs and rejected the meeting of the Hereafter. And in return, they will they receive precisely what they had been doing?

[107] And in the absence of Moses, his people carved out a calf from jewellery: a body from which a sound similar to that of a calf would come. Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them? They made it and were extremely unjust to themselves.

The Qur’ān has pointed out all these things to highlight the foolishness, naivety as well as the ingratitude of the Israelites: this is how they valued the one and only God Who showed them the signs of His majesty described above that they fashioned out a calf from their own jewellery and that too was such an artificial structure that merely resembled its physical shape and that produced its typical voice. They then regarded it to be the God who had delivered the Israelites from the slavery of the Egyptians and it is this calf who, in its guidance, would obtain for them the kingdom of the promised land? In this way, they satisfied their desire which they expressed to Moses (sws) before he went to mount Sinai and on which they were scolded by him.

Translators of the Torah have regarded this trial of calf-worship to be originated by Aaron (sws). The Qur’ān has, however, vehemently negated it, as will be seen in later verses and as shown in Sūrah Ṭāhā regarded it to be Sāmirī’s fabrication. He was a very cunning, wily and hypocritical person who had entered the faction of Moses’ for his own dirty objectives. For a person who was well versed with the art of idol making, it was not difficult at all to carve out a calf that bellowed. The worshippers at temples and their keepers in every period of time have shown such tricks and gimmicks to lure the common man that one is astonished. The famous traveller, Ibn Baṭūṭah (d. 1369 AD) has mentioned even more eerie things in his travelogue. It is natural that in areas where idols are worshipped the art of idol-making be very developed. I have had the chance to read the details of the ancient temple of Abū Sumbul that was transported from its place under international supervision because of the construction of the Aswan dam in Egypt. I was amazed to note that the idols of the Pharaoh and the queen were placed in the temple at such an angle that the first sun ray would shine on the Pharaoh’s forehead on his birthday. One can imagine what more can over-awe the minds of the common man that this arrangement for a king who was regarded to be the avatar of the sun-god.

In short, it was not difficult at all for Sāmirī and his associates to fashion out such an idol that produced the voice of a calf. However, he went a step ahead and weaved another trick of allusion which over-awed the people. More details will be given in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

The words “Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them?” occur in between as a parenthetical sentence. In other words, a deity is not a speechless and motionless toy; his greatest utility is to provide guidance. If he cannot do so, why should he be regarded as a deity and worshipped?

وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِيۡۤ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَرَاَوۡا اَنَّهُمۡ قَدۡ ضَلُّوۡا ۙ قَالُوۡا لَئِنۡ لَّمۡ يَرۡحَمۡنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَنَا لَنَكُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ [108]

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[108] And when they realized and saw that they had gone astray, they said: “If our Lord does

The expression سُقِطَ فِیْٓ اَیْدِیْهِمْ is an idiom that is normally translated as “to be ashamed.” However, since the necessary consequence of being ashamed is to realize one’s folly, so it can be translated thus. Lexicographers disagree regarding the origin of this idiom and it is but natural as investigating the origin of an idiom is a very difficult task. I am inclined to believe that something that is made to fall in hand makes it visible in such a form that even the most thick-headed person can see it and no one needs to ask about it. If this interpretation is correct, then it would mean that the Israelites were foolish enough to be lured by Sāmirī and his associates but when they saw the calf bellowing before them and they had regarded this to be their deity, they were dumbfounded. They saw their own silliness before their eyes.

Concomitant indications show that this realization came only to those among them who were sensible. Initially, when everyone was overcome with frenzy they were swept away like all others, but when the result came before their eyes they realized their mistake. In the collective sphere, such instances can be very dangerous and become a source of trial. Just one devil is needed to instigate the masses and work such mischief that the adhesion of the collectivity is undone, and at times sane and sensible people also realize this when it is too late.

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوْسٰۤی اِلٰی قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۙ قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُوْنِیْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِیْ ۚ اَعَجِلْتُمْ اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَاَلْقَی الْاَلْوَاحَ وَاَخَذَ
بِرَاْسِ اَخِیْهِ یَجُرُّهٗۤ اِلَیْهِ ؕ قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِیْ وَكَادُوْا یَقْتُلُوْنَنِیْ ۫ۖ فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِیَ الْاَعْدَآءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِیْ مَعَ
الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۵۰﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِیْ وَلِاَخِیْ وَاَدْخِلْنَا فِیْ رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ٘ وَاَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۵۱﴾[109]

It is evident from both the Torah and the Qur’ān that news of calf-worship reached Moses (sws) when he was still on mount Sinai. In fact, it is evident from the Qur’ān that it was God who informed Moses (sws) of it. Thus he came back angrily and in a state of sorrow. His anger was on the success of the prank shown by the mischievous elements and sorrow on the ignorance and foolishness of his nation. He first took to task those who were made responsible of their well-being.

The interrogative style in “did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” has a ring of rebuke in it: before God could disclose His prescribed way of worshipping Him, they invented one of their own. It may be kept in mind that idol-

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not show mercy to us and does not pardon our mistake, we shall end up among losers.”

109. And when Moses returned to his nation, full of anger and sorrow, he said: “You have represented me very badly in my absence. Did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” And he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head. Aaron said: “O son of my mother! These people overpowered me and almost killed me. So, do not give my and your enemies an opportunity to laugh at me and do not count me with the unjust.” Moses prayed: “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother. Admit us into Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.”

worship has come into being as a result of the belief of pantheism. The idolaters think that God dwells in these idols and thus worshipping them is worshipping God. More details are coming up in this *sūrah* on this issue.

The words “and he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head” depict how Moses (sws) was overcome with emotions. Since Aaron (sws) was entrusted with looking after the Israelites by Moses (sws) and he had full confidence in him as well, he was rebuked by him the most. This zeal on Moses’ part was because of his sense of honour for God and also because of his love for his brother.

The style of address adopted by Aaron (sws) is very affectionate. He did not call him by the words يا أخى (my brother); instead, he used the words: ابۡنَ اُمَّ (o son of my mother) evident from which are both affection and assurance. In his defence, he responded by saying: “People overpowered me and almost killed me.” It is evident from these words that he not only tried to stop this mischief but also endangered his life in doing so but the majority of the nation was lured away by Sāmirī. Aaron (sws) was left with such a small number of companions that it was not possible for him to forcibly stop the perpetrators. For this reason, he deemed it appropriate to wait for Moses (sws) lest any measure that he take may cause further harm. Thus it is stated in verse 94 of Sūrah Ṭāhā: اِنِّىۡ خَشِيۡتُ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلَ فَرَّقۡتَ بَيۡنَ بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ وَلَمۡ تَرۡقُبۡ قَوۡلِىۡ.[110]

These details also refute the false claim of the compilers of the Torah that it was Aaron (sws) who was responsible for the calf-worship of the Israelites. Not only was he vindicated, the actual perpetrator of the wrong-doing and the way he went about doing it were also exposed.

It is evident from the words “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother” that Moses (sws) had accepted the excuse presented by Aaron (sws). There was no way in the world that it could be imagined that he was from among the originators of this mischief; however, Moses (sws) must have thought that he did not do enough to stop it. Aaron’s answer cleared Moses (sws) of this doubt. It was obvious that if such were the circumstances that even sacrificing his life, was not enough to stop this mischief, it was only better for him that he stay clear of it and wait for Moses (sws) to return. Once the situation became clear, Moses (sws) sought his forgiveness and that of Aaron (sws) from God. He first requested for his own forgiveness because this is the etiquette for such a supplication. Also evident from this is that God will forgive any excess Moses (sws) has committed against his brother in his zeal for protecting the truth.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّخَذُوا الۡعِجۡلَ سَيَنَالُهُمۡ غَضَبٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ وَذِلَّةٌ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُفۡتَرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵۲﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ

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[110] He replied: “O the one given birth to by my mother! Grasp not my beard nor my head. I feared that you would but say: ‘You have created a rift among the Israelites and did not give regard to what I said.’”

عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَاٰمَنُوْٓا ۡ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾[111]

This is the punishment sounded to the Israelites at this juncture. The way it manifested itself is mentioned in verse 84 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: Moses (sws) directed the sincere and righteous of every tribe to execute those guilty of calf-worship. Thus this punishment was carried out and only those could save themselves who repented. Here faith is mentioned as a condition with repentance. This is because there are certain sins which wipe out the faith in a person. This sin of the Israelites was among them. Had this not been the case, mere repentance would have been sufficient.

وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوْسَى الْغَضَبُ اَخَذَ الْاَلْوَاحَ ۚۖ وَفِيْ نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُوْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾[112]

In the expression: سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوْسَى الْغَضَبُ, the preposition عَنْ after the verb سَكَتَ evidences that this verb encompasses the meaning of زال or a word of similar meaning. The implication is that Moses (sws) became silent and his anger died.

This verse also refutes the statement of the Bible that the tablets broke when they were thrown down. It is evident that placing these tablets on the ground was not because of showing any disregard to them; rather, it was an expression of anger and sorrow on the Israelites showing disregard to this grand favour: while they had been chosen for religious leadership by God, they ended up humiliating themselves because of this horrible sin.

The word نُسْخَة also means a word for word copy of something. Since the actual Torah was a copy of these tablets it is called so.

The words “and what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord” say precisely what is also mentioned in verse 3 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that the Qur’an is a guidance for those who fear God.

When the words “guidance” and “mercy” are mentioned together, they mean that guidance will be provided in this world and in the next, God’s mercy and blessing will be attained which is actually the consequence of following this guidance.

وَاخْتَارَ مُوْسٰى قَوْمَهٗ سَبْعِيْنَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيْقَاتِنَا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ اَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ وَاِيَّايَ ؕ
اَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَّا ۚ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ؕ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَهْدِيْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ اَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَ
ارْحَمْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنَّا هُدْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ؕ قَالَ عَذَابِيْٓ اُصِيْبُ بِهٖ

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111. Indeed, those who regarded the calf as a deity will be inflicted with wrath of their Lord and with humiliation in this very world. And it is in this way that We punish those who fabricate falsehoods. However, those who did evil deeds, then repented after them and accepted faith, then after this your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.”

112. And when Moses ’ anger cooled down, he picked up the tablets. And what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord.

مَنْ اَشَآءُ ۚ وَرَحْمَتِىْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ ۗ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ ۚ[113]

These verses mention Moses' second visit to mount Sinai to seek forgiveness for calf-worship. The narrators of the Torah have mixed up the first and second visits and because of this a lot of confusions have arisen. The Qur'ān has narrated both visits separately because the second one has great significance in the history of the Israelites. A special time was prescribed for it by God and for this Moses (sws) chose seventy people from his nation so that collective repentance could be expressed for a collective crime. Moreover, whatever happens, happens before the eyes of the nation's distinguished individuals so that they are able to bear witness to it before others.

The advent of the earthquake at this instance was a manifestation of God's power and splendour so that the Israelites are reminded that the God they are encountering has such might. In the Torah, this incident is mentioned thus:

> On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled … and Mount Sinai was covered with smoke … and the whole mountain[b] trembled violently. (Exodus, 19:16-19)

Though the Torah mentions this incident at the time when the ten commandments were given to the Israelites, it seems that a similar situation arose on this occasion too when Moses (sws) took seventy of his people to mount Sinai for repentance.

The words "Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier" show how Moses (sws) beseeched God and hoped to be shown mercy. And his subsequent words shows that only those people repent who are divinely given this urge given to those who pass their trials and received guidance. Those who are not given this urge go astray. It may be kept in mind that Moses (sws) has referred to the law of guidance repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān. At the same time, with full respect, h has also subtly stated that it is not easy to succeed in God's trials: it is dependent on His blessing and urge.

The word حَسَنَة is suppressed in the verse where the hereafter is mentioned because what is mentioned evidences it. The verb هُدْنَا means “to turn and tor repent.” There is a subtle reminder for the Jews too in using this word: if they have any shame left in them, they should at least honour their own name.

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[113] And Moses selected seventy men from his people for the time appointed by Us. Then when an earthquake seized them, Moses said: "Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier. So will you kill us for a crime perpetrated by the foolish among us? This was but a trial from You. You can lead astray through this whomsoever You wish and guide whomsoever You wish. You alone are our guardian. So, pardon us and have mercy on us, and you are the best of forgivers. And ordain what is good for us both in this world and in the Hereafter. We have turned towards You." God said: "I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend to and My mercy encompasses everything. So, I shall ordain it for those who are pious and who keep paying *zakāh* and for those who will believe in Our revelations.

The supplication of Moses (sws) was unconditional and absolute and precisely this was the need: because of his love for his people, he should have asked God in general words to ordain good for them in this world and the next. In the Torah also, the supplication mentioned at this instance is general in its wording. However, in response, the Almighty has delineated the real principle of His torment and mercy. The intention of God referred to in the words “I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend” is governed by His mercy and justice. In other words, this would mean that God will inflict His torment only on those who deserve it as per His principles of justice. As far as His mercy is concerned, it is for everyone in this world: people who are alive are alive because of God’s mercy and those who are receiving His sustenance are also indebted to His mercy; whatever the rich and the poor, the king and the commoner, the believer and the disbeliever have is because of God’s grant. However, the mercy that relates to the Hereafter is reserved only for those who fear Him in this world, pay the *zakāh* and specially for those who profess faith in His revelation.

It may be noted that the words are not يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا. They are in fact: وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ. This change in style is meant to stress the *mubtadā’* ie. specially those people who will profess faith in the revelations God. Those who have knowledge of parallel verses of the Qur’ān may well comprehend that this refers to the covenant made with the Israelites regarding professing faith in future prophets. It is explained in the following verse of Sūrah al-Mā’idah:

وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ؕ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ (٥: ١٢)

> And God said: “I shall be with you. If you diligently adhere to the prayer, pay the *zakāh* and profess faith in My messengers and help them and keep giving a generous loan to God. If you do this, I shall brush away your mistakes from you and will admit you into orchards below which streams flow.” Then after this he who showed disbelief strayed from the straight path. (5:12)

This covenant was taken about all prophets and messengers who came after Moses (sws). However, it specifically refers the unlettered prophet whose arrival was prophesied by Moses (sws) himself in very clear words, as has been referred to in Sūrah al-Baqarah. In Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is mentioned thus:

وَاِذۡ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيۡثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَاۤ اٰتَيۡتُكُمۡ مِّنۡ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكۡمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمۡ لَتُؤۡمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنۡصُرُنَّهٗ ؕ
قَالَ ءَاَقۡرَرۡتُمۡ وَاَخَذۡتُمۡ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمۡ اِصۡرِىۡ ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَقۡرَرۡنَا ؕ قَالَ فَاشۡهَدُوۡا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمۡ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ (۳: ۸۱)

And recall when God took a covenant from them about the prophets: “We gave you the law and wisdom ; then if a messenger comes forth in confirmation of what is before you, you shall profess faith in him and support him.” He asked: “Do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility given to you?” They replied: “We agree to it.” He said: “Then bear witness and I also bear witness with you.” (3:81)

The answer to Moses’ prayer ended in the previous sentence. From here onwards, the Almighty has added His own words to make the discourse relate to the circumstances of the times of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) that who in those times will be connoted by the words: وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ. It is thus stated:

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَتَّبِعُوۡنَ الرَّسُوۡلَ النَّبِىَّ الۡاُمِّىَّ الَّذِىۡ يَجِدُوۡنَهٗ مَكۡتُوۡبًا عِنۡدَهُمۡ فِى التَّوۡرٰٮةِ وَالۡاِنۡجِيۡلِ يَاۡمُرُهُمۡ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ وَ
يَنۡهٰٮهُمۡ عَنِ الۡمُنۡكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنۡهُمۡ اِصۡرَهُمۡ وَالۡاَغۡلٰلَ الَّتِىۡ كَانَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ
فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوۡهُ وَنَصَرُوۡهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوۡرَ الَّذِىۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ مَعَهٗ ۙ اُولٰۤـئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾[114]

The “unlettered prophet” obviously refers to Prophet Muḥammad (sws). Three words are used here as his attributes and also serve as his introduction: prophet (*nabī*), messenger (*rasūl*) and unlettered (*ummī*). The difference between a prophet and a messenger is that the latter sets up a court of justice of his nation in this world as per whose verdict it is punished or rewarded. He conclusively conveys the truth to his nation to the extent that they are not left with any excuse to deny it. For this reason, if it does not accept faith, it is necessarily destroyed and the messenger and his companions are necessarily given dominance, regardless of whether this takes place in his life or after his passing away. On the other hand, a prophet does have these traits. Viewed thus, every messenger is a prophet but no every prophet is a messenger. Muḥammad (sws) was both a prophet and a messenger.

The word *ummī* (unlettered) has been discussed under verse 20 of Sūrah Āl-i

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[114] Who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed.

‘Imrān.

This word refers to Muḥammad’s link with the Ishmaelites. They were a people devoid of education and religious scriptures. Ever since the departure of Ishmael (sws) no prophet came to them whereas during this time period several prophets arose among the Israelites. Among them, Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) were both prophets and messengers. For this reason, the Israelites called the Ishmaelites as unlettered. They used this word for them not merely as a factual distinction but also as a derogatory title. However, since being uneducated nomads without having any divine book was a fact, for this reason, as will become evident from Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah, the Qur’ān used this word as a title for them. It is evident from certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) too used this word in this connotation and the companions too would use it without any feeling of inferiority. It was as if this was a distinctive title for the Ishmaelites in contrast to the Israelites.

Here the verse refers to the predictions of the arrival of Muḥammad found in the Torah and the Gospel. Some of these exist even in the extant copies of these books. In the exegesis of the earlier *sūrahs*, they have been cited too. They are reproduced below merely to remind our readers. It is evident from these excerpts that the People of the Book were already waiting for a messenger from among the Ishmaelites and this had become a tradition among them:

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow brethren. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.” The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow brethren, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. (Deuteronomy, 18:15-19)

It is evident from this that Moses (sws) himself had made it evident to the Israelites that the coming prophet would be from among the Ishmaelites. The reason is that in this context the words “from your brothers” or “from their brothers” can only mean that he shall be from the Ishmaelites. This through the tongue of Moses (sws) was a reiteration of the glad tidings which Abraham (sws) gave of a prophet from the lineage of Ishmael (sws). Details have been presented in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Also evident from this is that he will not merely be a prophet; he will also be a messenger because the words “like me” and “like you” means like Moses (sws) when he was sent as a messenger to the Pharaoh and his nation. Through him, the Israelites were delivered and the Almighty destroyed the Pharaoh and his nation. On similar lines, Muḥammad (sws) too was sent as a messenger to the Quraysh and to the people of Arabia.

At another place in the Torah, the words are:

> The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with thousands of holy ones from the south and on his hand was a fiery *sharī‘ah* for them.(Deuteronomy, 33:2)

In my opinion, the expression fiery *sharī’ah* refers to what Jesus (sws) had said: He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire, (Matthew, 3:12). This is precisely the feature stated that we referred to above: a messenger sets up a court of justice for his nation and through him judgement is passed regarding right and wrong.

Isaiah (sws) has prophesied thus:

> “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not nuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” (42: 1-4)

Jesus (sws) has said:

> Jesus said to them, have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” (Matthew, 21:42-44)

> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17)

> I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)

Reflect on these prophecies. Jesus (sws) was the last of the Israelite prophets. No one after him came to the Israelites as a prophet. Then who else except Muḥammad (sws) can be the person predicted in them? Which is the stone that was broken by the builders but it ultimately became the stone placed in the corner? Whose majesty is being reflected in the statement that it will crush everything that falls on it and it will squash everything it falls on? Whose status is being referred to by the words as the chief of the world who will stay with them until eternity and will say to people what Jesus (sws) was not in a position to say. If a person reflects on these prophecies in a just and unbiased way without being obdurate and dismissive, he will cry out that if there is a person who these words predict, it can be none other than Muḥammad (sws). Who else can be the person prophesied in them?

The following words also serve as an introduction to his personality: “He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now.” The Jews had self-imposed many restrictions and the Almighty too had imposed some on them because of their rebelliousness. All these restrictions could only have been lifted with the advent of the last prophet. Thus it happened that with Muḥammad (sws)’s arrival, they were set free of these burdens but because of their wretchedness, they did not value this favour. I have already discussed this in detail under verses 93 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, verse 5 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah and in the exegesis of Sūrah al-An‘ām. For this reason, I will not go into more details.

The words “thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed,” are an invitation to profess faith in this new messenger to get rid off all restrictions and unnatural burdens. It is their foremost obligation to profess faith in him, introduce others to him, support him against his enemies and follow the light which is the Qur’ān sent down to them from God.

قُلْ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعَاِ ۨالَّذِىْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْىٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۖ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِىِّ الْاُمِّىِّ الَّذِىْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾[115]

When the discourse reached the mention of the Prophet (sws), the Israelites were invited through his tongue to profess faith. The words “all of you” mean that he is a messenger for the Ishmaelites, the Israelites as well all Arabs and non-Arabs. In the prophecy mentioned earlier too, it was stated that though the last messenger will be from the Ishmaelites, yet his sphere of jurisdiction would be towards all and all nations of the world will receive a share from his blessings. And it happened that he conclusively conveyed the truth directly to all the Arabs of his times whether they were the Ishmaelites or the Israelites, and also invited the kings of his times to faith. After him, this responsibility of bearing witness to the truth and inviting people to profess faith rests with his followers.

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[115] Say: People! I am sent to all of you as a messenger of the God. The God to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity but Him. He alone gives life and death. So, profess faith in God and in His unlettered prophet, His messenger who believes in God and His words and follows Him that you may be guided.

When such is the power and might of God as depicted in the verse, then they should not evade the call of the messenger – whose predictions are mentioned in their own book – on some false pretext or undue arrogance.

The words “who believes in God and His words” hint at what is mentioned in the prophecy of Moses (sws): I will put my words in his mouth and whatever I command him, he will say to his people.

The implication is that they should not think that this invitation towards faith by the messenger is a baseless notion or thought or a desire to impose his superiority and leadership on others; whatever they are being told is from God; the messenger himself professes faith in what he receives from God and invites them to this; he is not saying things from his own self. Moreover, also concealed in these words is the threat that is found in the prophecy mentioned earlier: since it is something God-sent, nothing can be added or subtracted from it by the prophet. On the contrary, if the prophet shows any slackness in this, he will be accountable before God and if people, in spite of this elaborate arrangement, do not realize their obligation towards him, they will be punished.

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى أُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٩﴾[116]

It has been mentioned earlier on many occasions that wherever the Qur’ān has severely rebuked and reprimanded the Israelites for breaking their promises, it has also lauded a small group among them that adhered to truth and justice and because of which the Israelites, in spite of their wrongdoings, were continued to be given further respite. Here too this group is referred to. The word أُمَّةٌ is not defined in order to refer to the small number of people in this group.

Also, because of concomitant indications, there is an incomplete verb suppressed before يَهْدُوْنَ and يَعْدِلُوْنَ. This is a reference to their scholars and judges who always had among them a group of the righteous. Such people were present in the time of the revelation of these verses as well and viewed Islam with an open mind and proclaimed its veracity. It is these people who will profess faith in Muḥammad (sws). Here they are mentioned for the purpose of encouragement. Also found in it is a subtle indication that the invitation of faith by the prophet will affect the hearts of the righteous among them and they will profess faith in the unlettered prophet.

The insertion (*taḍmīn*) that began with the words الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ ends on this verse. From here onwards, the discourse connects to the anecdote that was being narrated earlier.

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[116] And there has always remained a group of people among the nation of Moses who guides according to the truth and passes judgement according to it.

وَ قَطَّعۡنٰهُمُ اثۡنَتَیۡ عَشۡرَۃَ اَسۡبَاطًا اُمَمًا ؕ وَ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلٰی مُوۡسٰۤی اِذِ اسۡتَسۡقٰىهُ قَوۡمُهٗۤ اَنِ اضۡرِبۡ بِّعَصَاكَ الۡحَجَرَ ۚ فَانۡۢبَجَسَتۡ
مِنۡهُ اثۡنَتَا عَشۡرَۃَ عَیۡنًا ؕ قَدۡ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشۡرَبَهُمۡ ؕ وَ ظَلَّلۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمُ الۡغَمَامَ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمُ الۡمَنَّ وَ السَّلۡوٰی ؕ كُلُوۡا مِنۡ
طَیِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقۡنٰكُمۡ ؕ وَ مَا ظَلَمُوۡنَا وَ لٰكِنۡ كَانُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ یَظۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۰﴾ وَ اِذۡ قِیۡلَ لَهُمُ اسۡكُنُوۡا هٰذِهِ الۡقَرۡیَۃَ وَ كُلُوۡا مِنۡهَا حَیۡثُ
شِئۡتُمۡ وَ قُوۡلُوۡا حِطَّۃٌ وَّ ادۡخُلُوا الۡبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ خَطِیۡٓـٰٔتِكُمۡ ؕ سَنَزِیۡدُ الۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۶۱﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ
قَوۡلًا غَیۡرَ الَّذِیۡ قِیۡلَ لَهُمۡ فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَیۡهِمۡ رِجۡزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوۡا یَظۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۲﴾[117]

With slight variation, these verses occur in Sūrah al-Baqarah (57-60). They have been fully explained there. The word اَسۡبَاط has also been discussed in detail under verse 136 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The word قَطَّعۡنٰهُمۡ is used positively: the progeny of one father grew and developed as twelve independent families and God made each family grow and develop in the form of nations and communities and in this respect blessed them with favours but they showed ingratitude to each favour.

وَ سۡـَٔلۡهُمۡ عَنِ الۡقَرۡیَۃِ الَّتِیۡ كَانَتۡ حَاضِرَۃَ الۡبَحۡرِ ۘ اِذۡ یَعۡدُوۡنَ فِی السَّبۡتِ اِذۡ تَاۡتِیۡهِمۡ حِیۡتَانُهُمۡ یَوۡمَ سَبۡتِهِمۡ شُرَّعًا وَّ یَوۡمَ لَا یَسۡبِتُوۡنَ ۙ
لَا تَاۡتِیۡهِمۡ ۚۛ كَذٰلِكَ ۚۛ نَبۡلُوۡهُمۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا یَفۡسُقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۳﴾ وَ اِذۡ قَالَتۡ اُمَّۃٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ لِمَ تَعِظُوۡنَ قَوۡمَا ۨ ۙ اللّٰهُ مُهۡلِكُهُمۡ اَوۡ مُعَذِّبُهُمۡ عَذَابًا
شَدِیۡدًا ؕ قَالُوۡا مَعۡذِرَۃً اِلٰی رَبِّكُمۡ وَ لَعَلَّهُمۡ یَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۴﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوۡا مَا ذُكِّرُوۡا بِهٖۤ اَنۡجَیۡنَا الَّذِیۡنَ یَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنِ السُّوۡٓءِ وَ اَخَذۡنَا الَّذِیۡنَ
ظَلَمُوۡا بِعَذَابٍۭ بَـِٔیۡسٍۭ بِمَا كَانُوۡا یَفۡسُقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶۵﴾ فَلَمَّا عَتَوۡا عَنۡ مَّا نُهُوۡا عَنۡهُ قُلۡنَا لَهُمۡ كُوۡنُوۡا قِرَدَۃً خٰسِـِٕیۡنَ ﴿۱۶۶﴾[118]

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[117] And We divided them into twelve tribes to make separate groups. And when his nation asked for water from him, We revealed to Moses: “Strike the rock with your staff. ” So, twelve springs gushed forth. Each group appointed its place to acquire water. And We made the clouds cast a shadow over them and sent down *mann* and *salwā* to them. Eat these pure things We have given you. And they did not harm Us in any way; in fact, they remained being unjust to their souls only. And recall when they were told: “Dwell in this city and eat in it from wherever you desire and keep asking for forgiveness and enter its gate while bowing your heads. Thus, We shall forgive your sins. We shall bless the thorough with even more favours in future.” Then those among them who were unjust to themselves changed what was said to them by other words. Thus We sent down a torment on them from the heavens because they had remained unjust to themselves.

[118] And ask them about the state of affairs of that settlement which was near the sea shore when they would exceed the bounds of God. On day of the Sabbath, their fish would become prominent before them with heads raised and would not come on other days. In this way, We used to test them because they would be disobedient. And recall when one of their groups said: “Why do you counsel people whom God is going to destroy or sternly punish?” They replied: “This is because it becomes from us an excuse before your Lord and so that they can be secure from God’s wrath. ” Then when they forgot the thing through which they were reminded of, We

The settlement mentioned here is also referred to in verses 65-66 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The whole incident has been explained there. Here I will take up only those things which were not explained there.

The interrogative expression “and ask them” reflects rage and rebuke. The implication is that in spite of their mischief and misdeeds, they do not desist from their arrogant claims of piety and regard themselves to be the favoured ones of God, then they should be asked of the city that violated the sanctity of the Sabbath and as a result God made them an exemplary lesson.

The Qur’ān has not mentioned anything more about this city than that it was near the sea. The Torah also does not mention it. However, the way the Qur’ān has mentioned it shows that the Jews who lived at the time of the Qur’ān’s revelation knew it as a known tradition among them. Thus in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is mentioned hence:وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ (and you know those among you who exceeded the bounds of God in the matter of the Sabbath). Obviously, these words can only be uttered directly to the Jews about a thing that is famous among them.

Some people say that it was a city near Ilāh or ‘Aqabah. This inference could be correct. Cities that are situated near the sea become centre of trade activities if their location is appropriate and develop a lot. Since ancient times, ‘Aqabah had great significance in the history of the Israelites In the times of the Prophet Solomon (sws), it was the principal port for his fleets.

It is evident from the usage of the word الْقَرْيَةِ that just as it is used for small villages, it is also used for large cities.

The word شُرَّعًا is the plural of شارعة. When this word is used for spears, it means those carried vertically. Here it is used for fish. Thus it meant fish that have raised their heads. If a person stands at the side of a pond containing fish that have been reared, he will see this majestic view at the time when they appear: fish will be seen with their heads raised above water as if carrying vertical spears. At sea-side places of hunting, this view must be even more fantastic and enchanting. In the *sharī‘ah* of the Jews, they were prohibited to work and hunt on the Sabbath (Saturday). However, they could not contain themselves. They invented various subterfuges to catch fish on Saturday. It is the practice of God that when a nation becomes adamant on disobedience and does not desist even after the good people among them try to stop it, then its trial toughens from one degree to another. This happens by it reaching the extent of utter defiance and becoming worthy of punishment. Thus God created this situation for the Israelites. On week days, these fish would not be seen or seen very little but on the Sabbath it would seem that they appeared in arrays and processions.

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delivered those who were forbidding from evil. And those who had been unjust to themselves, We seized them in a stern punishment because they continued to be disobedient. So when with rebelliousness they continued to do precisely that from which they had been forbidden, We said to them: “Go, turn into despicable monkeys.”

This would incite the greed of the Israelites even more. It is well-known that a person begins to want more the things he is forbidden and desires at times blind a person. When a person is overcome with desire, he is not able to see clearly. It is a known fact that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. The Israelites because of their evil ways became entangled in this double trial and then went so far in it that they did not receive warning of even God’s torment, let alone the advice and counsel of the pious. Ultimately, God inflicted His curse on them.

Under verse 94 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah, it has been explained that just as restrictions were imposed on the Israelites regarding Sabbath, similarly, Muslims were stopped from hunting land animals when they were wearing *iḥrām* and were advised to protect themselves from such trials as ones the Israelites were afflicted with and ended up being destroyed. The verse reads:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهٗٓ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ رِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّخَافُهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ
فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ (٥: ٩٤)

> Believers! God will test you through a prey which will be accessible to your hands and spears so that God may see who fears Him without observing. Then they who transgressed the bounds prescribed by God even after this admonition, for them there is a woeful punishment. (5:94)

If the expressions تَاْتِيْهِمْ حِيْتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعًا and تَنَالُهٗٓ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ رِمَاحُكُمْ are reflected upon, their similarity will become evident.

It is evident from the words “and recall when one of their groups said …,” the people of that settlement had adopted this unfortunate opinion even after they had been advised against it by their well-wishers. It was not that such people were not present there. Such servants of God were there who not only tried to stop them from this wrongdoing but also went to this extent in doing this that a group from among them regarded this exercise to be a fruitless one, as cited in later words. However, these people did not accept this view and replied that they will continue with their counsel; if these people do not understand, they will at least be able their obligation before God and contended that it may well be that they do understand. If they do, then this is precisely what is needed.

This also ascertains the extent of responsibility which is imposed on every believer in enjoining good to others and in stopping them from evil. It becomes evident that there never comes a phase in this process when those who counsel think that they have fulfilled their responsibility and they should leave the rejecters to face the torment. In fact, they should continue with this counsel and advice until their last breath even if a single soul does not value it. It is such people who would be considered absolved of their responsibility when they face God. Those who may not indulge in evil but remain unconcerned about the good and evil choices made by others will not be absolved before God. Insha’Allāh, this topic will be discussed in detail under verse 25 of Sūrah Anfāl.

Also evident from the verse under discussion is that when the Almighty punishes people for their collected misdeeds, only those people are secured from it who stop people from evil.

The curse of turning them into monkeys is also mentioned in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 61 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah. A curse is severer than that punishment which destroys a nation. This is because the consequence of a curse is that it keeps a nation alive but this life is that of disgrace and humiliation. I have explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah that such was the nature of the curse on this settlement that they became an example of God’s wrath for the onlookers.

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ يَّسُوْمُهُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٦٧﴾[119]

The word تَأَذَّنَ means to inform someone of one’s decisive verdict. The warning mentioned in the verse was given to them by Moses (sws) a number of times and so did the later prophets in very vehement words.

Thus it is mentioned in the book of Leviticus:

> But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you. (26:14-17)

Similarly, in the book of Deuteronomy, it is stated:

> Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. (28:32)

The practical corroboration of this verdict of God is found in the annals of history. One can read the accounts of Nebuchadnezzar, Titus and Hitler. In every phase of history, the disgrace suffered by the Israelites can be seen in tantalizing words. It should be kept in mind that any intermediate respite given to them does not change the law of God. In fact, the style of the Qur’ān itself shows that they will be granted such periods of respite. However, each period of lull would be a prelude to a new calamity.

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119. And recall when your Lord decided that until the Day of Judgement, He will keep raising against them people who would inflict them with extremely cruel punishments. Indeed, your Lord is very swift in retribution and indeed is Forgiving and Merciful.

Today they are gathered in the blessed land of Palestine. This is only a temporary phase after which they will face a new form of punishment. More details of this will be found in the explanation of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.

In the last part of the verse the nature of this divine verdict is reflected through God’s attributes: none should think that God is unconcerned with the affairs of this world. Those who deviate from the path prescribed by Him are severely punished and He is very merciful and forgiving to those who turn to Him. The reason that it is said that God is swift in His retribution is to warn people who think that if there is a delay in it, then it means it is not going to happen at all. The implication is that none should remain under any misconception because of this respite given by God. When He seizes people, He does it in the blink of an eye and those who are seized also experience its extreme swiftness.

وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ اُمَمًا ۚ مِنْهُمُ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۫ وَبَلَوْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَسَنٰتِ وَالسَّیِّاٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۸﴾[120]

Contrary to its positive connotation in verse 160, here the word قَطَّعْنٰهُمْ is used to point to their disorganized and chaotic circumstances. The way Moses (sws) organized the Israelites reached its pinnacle in the times of David (sws) and Solomon (sws). After Solomon (sws), their organized and systematic state began to weaken and gradually the situation became so precarious that the Jews even lost their centre. They became divided into many groups and scattered to various parts of the world. Though in their individual capacity, there were both good and bad people among them but they become devoid of the traits that were necessary for a nation to develop and prosper. God, in accordance with His established practice, tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they turn to Him. Yet, they were so overcome by their desires that their personal resolve and determination were paralyzed. In spite of knowing that they are indulging in wrongdoing, they continued with it and would deceive their conscience by thinking that they are progeny of God’s favoured ones and hence will be forgiven by Him.

فَخَلَفَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَّرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ یَاْخُذُوْنَ عَرَضَ هٰذَا الْاَدْنٰی وَ یَقُوْلُوْنَ سَیُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۚ وَاِنْ یَّاْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهٗ
یَاْخُذُوْهُ ؕ اَلَمْ یُؤْخَذْ عَلَیْهِمْ مِّیْثَاقُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ لَّا یَقُوْلُوْا عَلَی اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوْا مَا فِیْهِ ؕ وَالدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَیْرٌ لِّلَّذِیْنَ
یَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۹﴾[121]

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[120] And We scattered them in the land in the form of various groups. Among them, some are pious and some otherwise also. And We tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they may take heed.

[121] Then, after them such people became inheritors of the Book of God who reap the provision of this world and say: “And we shall be forgiven for everything.” And if they are

The word خَلۡف means “unworthy descendents.” This refers to the gradual decadence of the Jews. They became morally corrupt as days passed. Even if something pricked their conscience because they orally laid claims to God’s book, they would lull it to sleep through the lullaby of false desires. They nurtured their hearts with these baseless desires: they think that they are chosen people, children of prophets like Abraham (sws), Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws), the fire of Hell will not touch them and that God would forgive them in deference to His favoured servants. In this way, they have compromised their faith and conscience so much that they continue to indulge in evil one after the other. It is because of this wretched behaviour on their part that further ahead in the *sūrah*, they are compared to dogs whose tongues continue to dangle out of their mouths whether they are scolded or not.

It has been referred to in verse 145 earlier and repeatedly mentioned in the Torah too that about the Torah they had repeatedly given their word that they would fully follow what was written in it, not deviate from its teachings and not wrongly ascribe anything to God. When this was so, why did they end up doing exactly what they committed not to?

The word درس has been discussed in detail in verse 105 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. Its real meaning is “to become dim.” When a book is read repeatedly and that too by sliding a finger over its lines, it becomes dim.

Here it is used derisively for the Jews that while reading the Book they have made it dim and faint, but even after reading it so many times they could not grasp its message.

The last part of the verse refers to the fact these slaves of this world have become indifferent to the dictates of their Book and become involved in this world to such an extent that they have no idea of the favours of the hereafter. The fact is that these favours are the real thing but these foolish people have no sense.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ يُمَسِّكُوۡنَ بِالۡكِتٰبِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيۡعُ اَجۡرَ الۡمُصۡلِحِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷۰﴾[122]

The words تَمۡسِيۡك andتَمَسُّك have the same meaning: “to strongly hold something.” In the light of the previous verse, this verse means that these unfortunate people have taken to following their desires while leaving aside the Book of God, whereas their attitude should have been different: those who strongly adhere to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer are ones who reform the character and conduct of people and God

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given a similar provision once again, they will grab it as well. Was not a promise taken from them about the Book that they will ascribe nothing but the truth to God? And have they even thoroughly read whatever is in it. And the Hereafter is better for those who fear God. Then do you not understand?

122. And those who strongly hold on to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer, then We will not waste the reward of the reformers..

will not waste the reward of such reformers. Diligence in the prayer is mentioned here a sign of strongly adhering to the Book and this is also something which guards God's covenant. In my opinion, this verse sounds an encouragement to a small group among the People of the Book who adhered to the truth in spite of the general decadence around them. It was this group which later professed faith in the last prophet.

وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾ [123]

This verse has been explained under verse 63 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It refers to the covenant taken from the Jews to strongly hold on to the Book of God. It was taken in the valley of the mountain and on this occasion God had made them observe His might and splendour so that they keep in mind that the God with whom they are making a promise has tremendous power. However, they forgot everything in following their desires.

Section VIII: Verses (172-206)

The *sūrah* ends on this section. It has been pointed out in the introduction that its real addressees are the Quraysh. First they are narrated the accounts of the past nations of their land. After that the history of the Israelites – who were present before them – is also recounted. The purpose of narrating the accounts of these nations is to show that the creator of the heavens and the earth is not unconcerned about the affairs of this world. He has been sending His messengers to guide people. Whenever these messengers came, they set up His court of justice on this earth. Nations who denied their respective messengers were destroyed and those who attested to them were successful. The Quraysh now face this decisive phase.

On verse 171, the series of historical anecdotes ended.

From here, the Quraysh are addressed and first reminded of the covenant found in human nature. It was made by with all the progeny of Adam (sws) by the Almighty regarding His oneness and providence. On its bases, the Quraysh are conclusively told that they can never present an excuse before God that they were not aware of it. Not only was this covenant made, a messenger of God has now been sent to remind them of it. It should be kept in mind that the Arabs were unlettered in the sense that they had not received any divine scripture. For this reason, debate with them could either have been based on the history well-known to them or on the obvious facts drawn from human nature and intellect. Thus first, their history was recounted to them in the

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[123] And recall when We suspended the mountain above them as if it were a canopy and they thought that it was about to fall upon them. "Hold fast to what We have bestowed on you and remember whatever is in it so that you remain secure from God's wrath. "

right way and now the discourse has turned to human nature and intellect.

After they are reminded of the above-mentioned covenant, the example of the Israelites is presented before them. They are told that that like these Israelites, they should not show ingratitude to God’s favour. The Israelites did not value it and adopted a thankless attitude. God always wanted to lift them, but they were always inclined to lowliness. Just as how a dog’s tongue dangles from his tongue whether one expresses love for him or scold him, for the Israelites, warning them and showing favour is the same.

After that, they are asked to value the gifts of eyes, ears, hearts and minds they have and are invited to use them in the right way. They must not tow just one line in religion by saying that they will worship whatever their forefathers used to without using their intellect. They should bear in mind that people who do not use the abilities of their head and heart and the faculties of their hearing and sight and in spite of being reminded continue to fall down are consigned to Hell by the Almighty.

After that, the attention of the Quraysh is directed towards the Prophet (sws). They are told that the person who is informing them of an imminent great danger is not mad or possessed. If they reflect on the system of the universe, their intellect will bear witness that this world is not meant to be a place of mere amusement or entertainment. It has been created with a very wise purpose. So it may well be that the time of the decision the Prophet (sws) is informing them is near at hand. If he is not able to tell them about its exact time of arrival, it does not mean that it is not certain to come. A prophet is not aware of the future; he is only a bearer of glad tidings and warnings.

After that, sorrow is expressed on human beings that while they receive all favours from God, they thank and appreciate others. They associate such partners with God who can neither benefit nor harm them.

At the end, the Prophet (sws) is urged to be steadfast in the wake of the nonsensical statements of his opponents and their baseless objections. He is then told what can become a means for him to attaining this resolve and perseverance.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَاِذۡ اَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنۡۢ بَنِىۡۤ اٰدَمَ مِنۡ ظُهُوۡرِهِمۡ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمۡ وَاَشۡهَدَهُمۡ عَلٰٓى اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۚ اَلَسۡتُ بِرَبِّكُمۡ ؕ قَالُوۡا بَلٰى ۛۚ شَهِدۡنَا ۛۚ اَنۡ
تَقُوۡلُوۡا يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّا كُنَّا عَنۡ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيۡنَ ۙ (١٧٢) اَوۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَشۡرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ ۚ
اَفَتُهۡلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الۡمُبۡطِلُوۡنَ (١٧٣) وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الۡاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمۡ يَرۡجِعُوۡنَ (١٧٤) وَاتۡلُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ نَبَاَ الَّذِىۡۤ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ
اٰيٰتِنَا فَانۡسَلَخَ مِنۡهَا فَاَتۡبَعَهُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الۡغٰوِيۡنَ (١٧٥) وَلَوۡ شِئۡنَا لَرَفَعۡنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗۤ اَخۡلَدَ اِلَى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ
اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ الۡكَلۡبِ ۚ اِنۡ تَحۡمِلۡ عَلَيۡهِ يَلۡهَثۡ اَوۡ تَتۡرُكۡهُ يَلۡهَثۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الۡقَوۡمِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ

فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَآءَ مَثَلًا ۨالْقَوْمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوْا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ مَنْ
يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيْ ۚ وَ مَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَ لَقَدْ ذَرَاْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْاِنْسِ ۖ
لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا ۫ وَ لَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا ۫ وَ لَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٩﴾ وَ لِلّٰهِ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا ۪ وَ ذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ ؕ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا
كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ وَ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَآ اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ بِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ
مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٢﴾ ۚۛ وَ اُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ اَوَ لَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا ٜ مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا
نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ اَوَ لَمْ يَنْظُرُوْا فِيْ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۙ وَّ اَنْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَدِ
اقْتَرَبَ اَجَلُهُمْ ۚ فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۭ بَعْدَهٗ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهٗ ؕ وَ يَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿١٨٦﴾
يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰىهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا لِوَقْتِهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؔۘ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾
قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ نَفْعًا وَّ لَا ضَرًّا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ لَوْ كُنْتُ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۛۚ وَ مَا مَسَّنِيَ
السُّوْٓءُ ۛۚ اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ وَّ بَشِيْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا
لِيَسْكُنَ اِلَيْهَا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰىهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا
لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨٩﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰىهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰىهُمَا ۚ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ اَيُشْرِكُوْنَ
مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْـًٔا وَّ هُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ ﴿١٩١﴾ ۖ وَ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَّ لَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَ اِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى
الْهُدٰى لَا يَتَّبِعُوْكُمْ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ اَدَعَوْتُمُوْهُمْ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ صَامِتُوْنَ ﴿١٩٣﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ عِبَادٌ
اَمْثَالُكُمْ فَادْعُوْهُمْ فَلْيَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ اَلَهُمْ اَرْجُلٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫ اَمْ لَهُمْ اَيْدٍ يَّبْطِشُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫
اَمْ لَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ يُّبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫ اَمْ لَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ؕ قُلِ ادْعُوْا شُرَكَآءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيْدُوْنِ فَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ اِنَّ وَلِيِّ َۧ
اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ ۖ وَ هُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَ لَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَ اِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوْا ؕ وَ تَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ وَ هُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَ اْمُرْ
بِالْعُرْفِ وَ اَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَ اِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ اِنَّ

الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا اِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوْا فَاِذَا هُمْ مُّبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَ اِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوْنَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا
يُقْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ وَاِذَا لَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بِاٰيَةٍ قَالُوْا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ مِنْ رَّبِّيْ ۚ هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ
هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَ اِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْاٰنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ وَ اَنْصِتُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾ وَ اذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ
نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَّ خِيْفَةً وَّ دُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَ الْاٰصَالِ وَ لَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ
لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَ يُسَبِّحُوْنَهٗ وَ لَهٗ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

And remember when your Lord had brought forth from the loins of Adam ’s children their progeny and had made them testify to themselves. He had asked: “Am I not your Lord?” They replied: “Yes, You are our Lord and We bear witness to it.” This We did lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: “We remained unaware of this,” or present this excuse: “Our forefathers had already adopted polytheism and we later became their children; then, will You destroy us on account of what these wrongdoers did?” And, in this way, We explain Our revelations so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth and so that they may turn to the right path. (172-174)

And narrate to them the account of the person to whom We had given Our revelations. But he ran away from them. The result was that Satan pursued him until he ended up among those who had gone astray. And if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires. Thus his example is like that of a dog: if you snub it, it pants or if you leave it alone, it still pants. This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations. So, narrate their anecdote so that they may reflect. What an evil parable is it of the nation which denied Our revelations and continued to be unjust to its own self. Those whom God guides are the ones who are guided. And those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers. (175-178)

And We have created many among the jinn and men for Hell. They have hearts through which they do not understand; they have eyes through which they do not see; they have ears through which they do not hear. They are like animals. In fact, they are even more misguided. It is these people who are totally heedless. And God has only good attributes. So, call Him by these only and leave aside those who are adopting a wrong attitude about these attributes. Whatever they are doing, they will soon receive its due. And amongst those We have created, there also is a group that has been guiding people according to the truth and also passing judgement according to it. And those who have denied Our revelations, We are leading them to destruction from where they cannot even know. And I am continuing to grant them reprieve because My strategy is very secure. (179-183)

Have they not reflected that their companion is not inflicted with any lunacy? He is only an open warner. Have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near? So, after this, in what word will they profess faith ? None can guide those whom God leads astray. He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness. They ask you about the Judgement Day: “When at last will it arrive?” Say: Its knowledge rests with my Lord alone. Only He will bare it at its appointed time. The heavens and the earth are burdened with it. It will come upon you suddenly. They ask you as if you have researched into it. Say: Its knowledge rests with God alone, but most people do not know this fact. Say: I do not have any authority to benefit or to harm even my own self except what God intends. And had I been aware of all the unseen, I would have gathered a big treasure of good and no harm would have ever come to me. I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith. (184-188)

It is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it. So when the man overspreads the woman, she bears a slight burden. Then she keeps moving about with it for some time. So when she becomes burdened, both pray to God, their Lord: “If You grant us a healthy child, we shall certainly remain among those grateful to You.” But when God gives them healthy children, they associate others in what they have been blessed with. Exalted is God from the things they associate. Do they associate those who do not create anything; in fact, are created themselves! And neither can they help them in any way nor their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not come after you. Whether you call them or remain silent, it is the same. Whomsoever you call besides God are people like you. So call them; they should reply to you, if you are truthful. Do they have feet with which they walk? Do they have hands with which they grasp? Do they have eyes with which they see? Do they have ears with which they hear? Say: Bring all your partners you associate with God. Then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite. My guardian is God Who has revealed this Book and He is the guardian of the righteous. And those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not hear what you say. And it seems to you that they are looking towards you; yet in reality they see nothing. Forgive, enjoin good and pay no heed to the ignorant. And if you feel any temptation from Satan, seek refuge with God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. Those who are God-fearing, when they are tempted by Satan in any way they direct their attention to God and their hearts light up at once. And those who are brothers of these who do not fear God, they only increase them in error ; then they do not relent in this in any way. (189-202)

And when you do not bring a sign to them, they say: “Why did you not fabricate it?” Say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord. These are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe. And when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be shown mercy. (203-204)

And remember your Lord morning and evening in your heart with humility and with fear and in a low voice and do not be among those who are indifferent. Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only. (205-206)

Explanation

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْۢ بَنِیْٓ اٰدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَاَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى ۛ شَهِدْنَا ۛ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَشْرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۚ اَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿١٧٤﴾[124]

The word اِذْ also serves to remind people of an incident that they accept as a certain happening regardless of having forgotten it or having deviated from it. Moreover, in the presence of concomitant indications an address in the singular encompasses plurality. In such cases, the speaker is addressing every person of the group individually.

In the expression: مِنْۢ بَنِیْٓ اٰدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ, the words مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ are a *badal* (permutative) from مِنْۢ بَنِیْٓ اٰدَمَ. It is evident from this that this incident does not relate to Adam’s progeny belonging to a certain era. On the contrary, it relates to all his progeny that will be born until the Day of Judgement and was done at the time before these spirits were blown into their bodies.

It is evident from these verses that God did not take a promise from the progeny of Adam (sws) that merely he was their God; He asked them to accept him as their Lord (*rabb*) also. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs never rejected him being God; however, they had many Lords besides God even though in this pledge they had acknowledged the providence of God alone.

In the expression: اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هٰذَا غٰفِلِيْنَ, a word to the effect كراهة (lest) is suppressed before اَنْ. Thus its precise translation would be: lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: “we remained unaware of this.”

It is evident from this that as far as monotheism and obvious innate guidance provided by human nature are concerned, every person will be held accountable about them on the basis of the afore-mentioned pledge whether he has received the message of a prophet or not. In case he did, it will be a further burden of proof on him and his accountability will become two-fold. However, if this was no the case, then a person will not have an excuse regarding the obvious innate guidance he was provided by his nature.

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[124] And remember when your Lord had brought forth from the loins of Adam ’s children their progeny and had made them testify to themselves. He had asked: “Am I not your Lord?” They replied: “Yes, You are our Lord and We bear witness to it.” This We did lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: “We remained unaware of this,” or present this excuse: “Our forefathers had already adopted polytheism and we later became their children; then, will You destroy us on account of what these wrongdoers did?” And, in this way, We explain Our revelations so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth and so that they may turn to the right path.

Similarly, ancestral polytheism will not be accepted as an excuse from a person. In other words, if polytheism is an obvious reality found in one's nature, any external excuse against it will not be acceptable.

In the last of the above quoted verses, the coordinated clause of وَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ is suppressed. If this is taken into account, the translation of the verse would be: "In this way are We explaining our revelations so that We can conclusively convey the truth to people and so that after this explanation those who want to repent from polytheism can do so." In other words, after taking this pledge from mankind, the Almighty has further looked upon them with favour by narrating to them the details of this pledge so that those who want to rectify their mistake can do so and those who want to be adamant on their stubbornness should regard themselves responsible of its consequences and not blame anyone else.

The Qur'ān has mentioned this incident as a real happening and explained its significance that as far as God's providence is concerned, everyone will be held accountable before God on the basis of this pledge. Considering this significance, a question arises: do people have any recollection of such an incident? If not, then how can it be accepted that human beings did in fact make such a pledge and on its basis they will be held accountable before God regarding monotheism.

The answer to this question is that as far as this pledge is concerned, its cognizance is found within human nature. However, if human beings do not remember its time and location, then this does not mean that the pledge never took place. At most what a person can say is that he remembers the pledge but does not remember its occasion. So, God has informed him of this occasion: before human beings were born, they made this pledge with God in the unseen world (*'ālam al-ghayb*). And only God could have informed them of this because only He knows the unseen world. Since human beings have remembrance of this pledge in their nature, it is sufficient to be used as a conclusive proof against them.

A further question arises here: if from the very beginning human beings were aware of this pledge, then its consequence should have been that after creation human beings should have worshipped one God. On the contrary, our modern philosophers say that human beings began their religion with polytheism. The manifestation of various calamities created a fear in them of various unseen forces. This fear led them to worship these unseen forces. So, they started to worship them. Then gradually they grew in knowledge and this led them to an abandonment of these hypothetical deities and acceptance of one God. I have refuted this view of these philosophers in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah and presented even more details in my book "Essence of

Polytheism." In my opinion, this logic presented by them totally lacks logic. I have shown on both these instances that fear is the name given to an emotion that arises because of a possibility of losing something that a person has and is also dear to him. This proves that the awareness of favours and their provider and the zeal to express gratitude for them comes before fear and the factors that cause it. For this reason, human beings did not begin their religion on the basis of fear; they, in fact, began it by thanking their Lord for His favours and by worshipping Him. However, later because of various causes – as referred to in my above book – they deviated from this straight path and stumbled into various side-tracks.

One group says that when a person is born, his nature is like a clean slate. Whatever is written on this slate is written later once his cognizance develops and is added merely because of the effects and influences of his environment on him. However, this is an absolutely wrong view. The question is: what is the origin of the effects and influences of his environment? Whatever good and bad traditions and currents are found in the environment are themselves the consequence of human nature itself. What purely arise through his nature are good, just and universally acknowledged facts. However, if these pure things are overcome by unbridled desires of human beings, they become evil. The unbalanced and crooked approach about God too has arisen from here. In true human nature, there exists only the acknowledgement of a single God. The monotheists and polytheists of the world are united thus far. Hence no argument is needed for it. However, the onus of proof for the existence of other deities lies with the proponents of polytheism. Thus the Qur'ān has demanded from them on many occasions to produce any proof of their self-styled deities.

The whole philosophy of the Qur'ān is based on human nature. It claims that whatever beliefs and deeds it instructs people about and whatever sins it stops people from are not externally imposed on them. They are only reminded of what is already innately found in their nature. However, in order to acquire immediate gains and pleasures, they have ignored this ingrained guidance. For this reason, the Qur'ān calls itself ذِکۡر (reminder) and ذِکۡرٰی (reminder) and regards its teachings to be تذکیر (reminder).

These are all undeniable facts. However, today the magic of Marx and Freud has mesmerized people. People have been blinded by their baseless views so much that they only regard a human being to be an amalgam of hunger and sexual desires. In their view, all the philosophy and ideology of human beings revolve around these two things. Religion and morality have been moulded on these two aspects by Marx and Freud. In this way, people who were already slaves to the cravings of food and sex have been provide with two guides they proudly cite in their favour.

وَ اتۡلُ عَلَیۡہِمۡ نَبَاَ الَّذِیۡۤ اٰتَیۡنٰہُ اٰیٰتِنَا فَانۡسَلَخَ مِنۡہَا فَاَتۡبَعَہُ الشَّیۡطٰنُ فَکَانَ مِنَ الۡغٰوِیۡنَ ﴿۱۷۵﴾ وَ لَوۡ شِئۡنَا لَرَفَعۡنٰہُ بِہَا وَ
لٰکِنَّہٗۤ اَخۡلَدَ اِلَی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ اتَّبَعَ ہَوٰىہُ ۚ فَمَثَلُہٗ کَمَثَلِ الۡکَلۡبِ ۚ اِنۡ تَحۡمِلۡ عَلَیۡہِ یَلۡہَثۡ اَوۡ تَتۡرُکۡہُ یَلۡہَثۡ ؕ ذٰلِکَ مَثَلُ الۡقَوۡمِ

الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَآءَ مَثَلًا ۨالْقَوْمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوْا
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٧٨﴾[125]

Though the word الَّذِی primarily connotes a defined entity but in parables it is not essential that it refer to a particular person that exists physically. A speaker in fact imagines the person whose parable he wants to cite in his mind and then mentions a certain description that also fully applies to that person. Since only a portrayal of the incident is meant, eloquence demands that he be mentioned as a defined entity. This transforms the parable into the portrayal of a particular personality to the listener as if he has not merely heard about him; he has also observed him. Here this demonstrative pronoun refers to the Jews as a nation. They are compared to a person who was blessed by God with His signs. However, they did not duly value them and ignored them. As a result in accordance with God’s established practice, devils are deputed on them and they are led astray. Thus in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is said: وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ.[126] The fact that this is not a mention of a known person and is a parable of a nation that has denied God’s signs is evident from the words of the verse itself: “This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations.”[127] So, as contended by some exegetes, this pronoun is not meant for some Bal‘ām ibn Bā‘awrā’.[128] There was none by this name among the Jews. It is evident from the account narrated earlier about the Jews that the whole nation was Bal‘ām ibn Bā‘awrā’. The word إنسلاخ means “to take off one’s clothes and become naked.” The expression إنسلخ من ثيابه refers to the fact that the Almighty blessed them with a royal robe but they stripped themselves of it and became naked.

Consider the words: “and if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires.” The expression أخلد إلى الشئ means to bend and incline towards something in such a way that a person becomes infatuated with it. The words actually refer to God’s established practice regarding providing guidance: if people value the signs blessed to them by God, they are given success in worldly and religious affairs through them. Their intellects and souls are elevated. However, people who follow their own desires even after being blessed with these signs and walk like hounds by smelling the ground are consigned to their desires by God and Satan gets the better of them.

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[125] And narrate to them the account of the person to whom We had given Our revelations. But he ran away from them. The result was that Satan pursued him until he ended up among those who had gone astray. And if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires. Thus his example is like that of a dog: if you snub it, it pants or if you leave it alone, it still pants. This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations. So, narrate their anecdote so that they may reflect. What an evil parable is it of the nation which denied Our revelations and continued to be unjust to its own self. Those whom God guides are the ones who are guided. And those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers.

[126] And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

[127] The parable will be discussed further under verses 91-92 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

[128] See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 267.

Next the verses state a parable that depicts their continuous inclination towards lowliness and following their desires. Readers may note how effective and appropriate this parable is. It is stated in verses 168-169 earlier how the Almighty tested them through His favours as well as His warnings. However, they were so helpless because of their desires that neither did the favours nor did the warnings have any impact on them. Every instance of greed made them stumble. This situation of theirs resembles a dog. A dog never walks with its head held straight. It always walks while smelling the earth. In search of food, its nose evaluates every fair or foul thing it comes across. His guide is not his eye but his nose which acts like its radar for quenching hunger. Moreover, another trait that a dog has is that its tongue is always protruding from his mouth. In this way, it becomes a picture of greed and meanness. Whether someone pats him or shoves him away, it continues to remain in this state. Similarly, whether it is hungry or fully satiated, there is no change in its state. Dogs which are well kept and treated royally in all respects are no different too. The Qur’ān says that the state of the Jews is no different. They have no self-control. Their volition has totally deserted them. They have become slaves to their desires. Voracity and meanness has become their second nature. Outwardly, they are like human beings; but inwardly their instincts are the same as that of dogs.

The expression تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ implies تَحْمِلْ العَصَا عَلَيْهِ (you lift a stick on it) or تَحْمِلْ الحَجَرَعَلَيْهِ (you life stones on it). The word يلهث means to extend the tongue out of the mouth and is mostly used for dogs

As indicated earlier, this parable of the Jews is recounted before the Quraysh and the purpose is induce them to value the favour that was being bestowed to them in the form of the last *sharī‘ah*. Instead of valuing it, they were disregarding it. In other words, the Prophet (sws) was directed to narrate the state of the affairs of the nation who denied God’s revelations. God blessed them with these revelations because He wants to grant them success provided they value these revelations, follow them and are guided by them. If they do not value them and remain a slave to their desires, they will meet the same fate as that of the Jews.

A nation that denies God’s revelations because of its desires becomes wretched and heedless. Its example is very evil and horrible and the Quraysh should not follow it. Those who follow it will not harm God’s revelation in any way. They only harm their own selves. This deplorable attitude will only lead them to their own humiliation.

The words “those whom God guides are the ones who are guided; and those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers” on the one hand sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and on the other warn the Quraysh. In other words, only they will be guided who are blessed by God with the urge to seek guidance and this urge only arises in those people who want to be guided and use their God-given abilities. People who follow their desires and shut their eyes and ignore the calls of their mind and heart are left by God to wander about. It is these people who are the real unfortunate ones.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَاْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۖ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا ۫ وَلَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَا ۫ وَلَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۷۹﴾[129]

The verse says that people who deprive themselves of guidance ultimately become the firewood of Hell. The understanding, seeing and hearing mentioned in the verse refer to their essence. In other words, they used expended all their abilities and faculties in following their desires and anything besides it they never paid heed to. Thus they are like animals. This is because just as animals confine their efforts to satisfy the needs of their bodies, in a similar way, their endeavours too are restricted to their material needs and desires. They are less sensible than animals because animals at least take advantage of all the abilities found in their instincts and leave no stone unturned in this regard. On the other hand, human beings not only do not take real advantage of the higher abilities which the Almighty has bestowed on them, they also at times end up doing things which even an ox or a donkey would not do. For example, human beings in spite of being human beings become so foolish and silly that they start worshipping trees, stones and animals but an ox or a donkey can never be so imprudent. The Qur’ān states that it is such people who are not aware in the real sense because even animals are not inflicted with this unawareness.

It is evident from this that if the Almighty has said that He has created people to consign them to Hell, it does not mean that since birth they are destined for this evil abode. On the contrary, when they are born, they are given the ability to think, understand, see and hear. The principle He enunciated was that those who use these abilities correctly will be guided by Him to Paradise and others will be sent to Hell. It may be kept in mind that this is basically a warning to the Quraysh.

وَلِلّٰهِ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى فَادْعُوْهُ بِهَا ۪ وَذَرُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآئِهٖ ؕ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۰﴾[130]

This verse relates to verse 172 in which the pledge of monotheism found in human nature is mentioned. In between, people who did not value the revelations of God

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129. And We have created many among the jinn and men for Hell. They have hearts through which they do not understand; they have eyes through which they do not see; they have ears through which they do not hear. They are like animals. In fact, they are even more misguided. It is these people who are totally heedless.

130. And God has only good attributes. So, call Him by these only and leave aside those who are adopting a wrong attitude about these attributes. Whatever they are doing, they will soon receive its due.

were referred to and became blind and deaf in spite of receiving some grand abilities from God.

It is said that those who have adopted a deviant attitude regarding the attributes of God, ascribe partners to Him or assign sons and daughters to Him negate His attributes of power, knowledge and peerlessness. Only those attributes should be ascribed to God that are in accordance with Him being one and only. No such attribute should be ascribed to Him that equates Him with His creation

The word يُلْحِدُوْنَ is used here to connote disrespect to the attributes of God. The implication is that they ascribe names and attributes to God which are not befitting for His majesty in any way, which are derisive to His being and attributes and from which He is exalted and beyond.

Leaving such people alone means to consign their matter to God. They will soon encounter punishment for what they are doing.

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَآ اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١٨١﴾[131]

The verse implies that everyone is not the same in God’s creatures. If, on the one hand, there are the blind and the deaf as mentioned earlier, then on the other hand there are those who use their intellect, recognize the truth, guide people according to it and also decide matters in its light. Just as earlier in verse 159, the good souls among the Israelites are mentioned and encouraged, in a similar way, here after saying that many people have been created for Hell because of their own ill-ways, some good souls are pointed to. In other words, amongst a decadent lot, some pious people who tread the path of truth also exist who ultimately were able to accept faith.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨٢﴾ وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ۗ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾[132]

This is a further explanation of the warning sounded in verse 180 to those who were denying God’s revelations. If these people are being given respite, they should not think that they are beyond God’s grasp. This respite is being given to them so that fully indulge in their misdeeds and are left with no excuse for clemency. When a fisherman has full confidence in himself, he gives the fish reprieve to the ultimate extent. The fish thinks that it has won the day whereas the fisherman continues to give it respite because he knows that however much it may exert, it will never be able to escape his grasp. However much it may swim about will not help it flee from his hold. On the contrary, all its efforts will make it so tired that finally it will end up on the

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131. And amongst those We have created, there also is a group that has been guiding people according to the truth and also passing judgement according to it.

132. And those who have denied Our revelations, We are leading them to destruction from where they cannot even know. And I am continuing to grant them reprieve because My strategy is very secure.

shore, haggard and exhausted. Similar is the case with God’s planning. His plans are bound to materialize and His grasp is inescapable. No one can run away from His control. For this reason, He continues to give respite to people in spite of their rebelliousness. The rebellious think that they have succeeded in their plans whereas the more they try to run away, the closer they come to their own destruction. Only he who fears that his planning may fail is in a hurry. But he who is going to hit the bulls eye and hunt down his target come what may does not need to show haste.

The word إستدرجه means to gradually be deceived. This is the greatest trial of God and is inflicted upon those who rebel against Him.

اَوَ لَمۡ يَتَفَكَّرُوۡا ٚ مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمۡ مِّنۡ جِنَّةٍ ؕ اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ اَوَ لَمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡا فِىۡ مَلَكُوۡتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا
خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ۙ وَّ اَنۡ عَسٰٓى اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنَ قَدِ اقۡتَرَبَ اَجَلُهُمۡ ۚ فَبِاَىِّ حَدِيۡثٍۢ بَعۡدَهٗ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ مَنۡ يُّضۡلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا
هَادِىَ لَهٗ ؕ وَيَذَرُهُمۡ فِىۡ طُغۡيَانِهِمۡ يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ ﴿١٨٦﴾[133]

The word صاحبهم refers to Prophet Muḥammad (sws). It is used to direct the attention of the Quraysh that this prophet of God is not a stranger to them. In fact, he is their everyday companion. His childhood and adult age were spent among them and with them. They have seen and tested him in every period and at every stage and he was tried in all sorts of circumstances. Why then do they not reflect that how can this person who was the best among them in uprightness, veracity, selflessness, purity, determination and wisdom has suddenly gone mad and crazy? What have they seen in him that resembles madmen and lunatics? The fact is that he is not mad and crazy at all. Just as a naked warned in their times while standing at an elevated place would sound alarm in case of any enemy attack, in the same way, the Prophet (sws) is an open warner from God who is warning them of their future and the punishment that will befall them. He is so concerned and worried about them that he is trying day and night to convince them to reflect on the truth. He is not doing this because there is some kink in his mind but because he is observing a huge danger lurking over their heads. On the other hand, because of their lack of insight they are not able to see this imminent danger. It is not madness but real awareness of the truth and profound love for his people that has made him so worried about them. It is their extreme foolishness, cruelty and ingratitude that they regard him to be mad and crazy.

It may be kept in mind that if the Quraysh called the Prophet (sws) to be mad, then it was not because they actually thought so. How can the intelligent among them be so naïve as to regard someone who was an embodiment of solemnity and intellect to be so? Moreover, if they had said so with their hearts, who would have believed them? In reality, the leaders of the Quraysh thought it strange that the Prophet (sws) warn them day and night of the punishment – which was necessarily to visit them in accordance with God's established practice regarding those who deny their messengers. They could not comprehend how and why could such a punishment befall them. On the other hand, they could also not ignore the vehement and fervent way in which a person of high character and conduct would warn them with such conviction and certainty of its imminent arrival. They had to come up with an interpretation of this. Their own political standing also needed an interpretation because those among them who were uninitiated and were not inflicted with any arrogance were bound to get impacted by his selfless sympathy and concern. It was to do away with this impact and maintain their own political awe and authority that they floated this hoax: just as a fairly normal person, sometimes gets afflicted by craze and lunacy, becomes infatuated with delusions and is controlled by this madness, in a similar way, he too has become delusive; he is deceived by his mental state in thinking that a punishment is going to visit his people. So, the Quraysh would imply that people should ignore this craze of his. The Qur'ān has actually refuted this childish assurance of the Quraysh: they know that he has no parallel among them as regards poise and balance in thoughts and deeds as well as in his mind and heart. How then do they have the audacity to call him mad. He is the pinnacle of mental maturity and stability. He is not a lunatic; he is an open warner from God and has holy attributes; he can see the imminent storm that is going to visit his people.

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[133] Have they not reflected that their companion is not inflicted with any lunacy? He is only an open warner. Have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near? So, after this, in what word will they profess faith ? None can guide those whom God leads astray. He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness.

The words "have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God" imply that if these people had reflected on this system, it would have become evident to them that the person who is warning them of punishment is not mad; it is, in fact, they themselves who are blind and deaf. Whatever he is saying is reverberated from every nook and corner of this universe. Any person who reflects on the system of this universe will cry out that this universe is not without a purpose; it is going to necessarily culminate on a day of judgement. On that day, only they will succeed who lead a life of purity and uprightness. Those who deviate from this path will become the firewood of Hell. This evidence borne by the collective system of the universe can only be denied by those who have closed their eyes and ears and have disregarded their intellect and cognizance. Moreover, every component of this universe also bears witness to this conclusion. Whatever God has created is a manifestation of His power, mercy, wisdom and providence. God has also prescribed a time for what He has created. Then how is it possible that the wise and powerful being – none of whose acts is without wisdom – leave this world without any purpose and not judge the good and evil that ensues in it? Moreover, if He has prescribed a time period for everything in this world, how can He not prescribe a time period for this world and for the nations that thrive in it? Here it may be kept in mind that an obvious part of the consequence that a person derives after reflecting on the heavens and the earth has been suppressed. If this is stated in words, it would be: Have they not reflected on the heavens and the earth and on what has been created by God so that it could have become evident to them that this universe is not without a purpose. At some instances in the Qur’ān, this suppression is stated in words. Thus in verse 191 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is said: وَ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth and say: “Lord! You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You for You do not do anything in vain! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.”)

The words “and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near?” are coordinated to the suppression just referred to. In other words, if they had reflected on the system of the heavens and the earth and on the wisdom on which creation has been done, it would have become evident to them that this universe has a purpose and will exist until a certain prescribed time. It may also have become evident to them that their own time of respite – which the Prophet (sws) was warning them of – has drawn near. This is because if the Almighty has not created this world to be a place of mere amusement or entertainment, why would He not check it? If He has seized other nations – whose history has been recounted earlier – why would He not seize the Quraysh for their misgivings? This is in fact a corroborating evidence in favour of the veracity of Prophet Muḥammad (sws): whatever he is saying should not be regarded as lunacy; if anything, they should shed tears on their own thick-headedness and madness.

There can be two opinions about the pronoun “this” in “so, after this, in what word will they profess faith ?” One could be the prescribed time mentioned earlier and the other could be the revelations of the Qur’ān, the denial of which has produced this result. Ustādh Farāhī seems more inclined to the second of these views; however, I am in favour of the first. In other words, the implied meaning is: what will they believe in when their time expires? The time to accept faith is before their time expires but they are adamant on seeing the warning the Prophet (sws) is threatening them with to materialize. However, someone should ask these wretched people what else would they profess faith in after it arrives. Once this happens, everything will reach its culmination. The real test is to accept it before its arrival. Once it comes, they will have to face its consequences.

The words cited earlier express sorrow and yearning. Now the next sentence “none can guide those whom God leads astray; He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness” further emphasize the earlier words. These people do not realize that they are facing an established practice of God and those who face it cannot be guided by anyone. Such people keep wandering about in their rebelliousness.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا لِوَقْتِهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕۘ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ
لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۷﴾[134]

A question can be posed to make fun. Here, concomitant indications show that this precisely is the case here. The word السَّاعَةِ means “time” and here it refers to the time of punishment and to the hereafter. The Prophet (sws) was warning them of its sudden arrival. It is known that every messenger warns his nation of two punishments: first, which appears in this world for nations that reject their respective messenger; second, the punishment these disbelievers would encounter in the hereafter. The word السَّاعَة encompasses both these punishments because those who reject God’s Messengers make fun of both these punishment.

The word اَيَّانَ connotes متى (when). However, it is used when the purpose is to ask about something in order to express amazement and improbability about it. Similarly, the word مُرْسٰى is used for the anchoring of a ship. The sarcasm concealed in the question can well be gauged from this word. It is as if it is being said: when will that threatened warning materialize? Where has this ship got stuck? When will it come to the shore to anchor?

The words “the heavens and the earth are burdened with it; it will come upon you suddenly” have generally interpreted to mean that the Day of Judgement will be a heavy incident in the heavens and the earth. Though this itself is a correct inference, this style also refers to another aspect: this hour is a burden on the heavens and the earth. Just as a pregnant woman puts on weight near delivery because of the child she is carrying even though no one knows the exact time of delivery – yet every person with eyes can see and is certain that this woman will deliver the child and this will happen soon – the case of discerning minds who reflect on the heavens and the earth regarding the Day of Judgement and punishment is no different. They see that the heavens and the earth are burdened with this weight. And even though they cannot say with certainty when the heavens and the earth will be able to relieve their burden, yet just as a pregnant woman in her final days anxiously awaits the time of delivery, a similar anxiety and longing is prominent in the heavens and the earth. Hidden in this verse is also a subtle indication for those who are not able to see the signs of the Day of Judgement and punishment in the heavens and the earth. They are similar to those who are not able to see the bulge of a pregnant lady who is about to deliver. The part “will come upon you suddenly” implies that people should observe its signs of arrival and being convinced about its arrival as a result. They should prepare for it. Whenever it will come, it will all of a sudden and none except God knows when it will come. If its time of arrival is not known, it does not mean that it will not come. Everyone knows that a pregnant lady will deliver though none knows the exact time of her delivery.

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[134] They ask you about the Judgement Day: “When at last will it arrive?” Say: Its knowledge rests with my Lord alone. Only He will bare it at its appointed time. The heavens and the earth are burdened with it. It will come upon you suddenly. They ask you as if you have researched into it. Say: Its knowledge rests with God alone, but most people do not know this fact.

Consider next the part “they ask you as if you have researched into it; say: its knowledge rests with God alone.” The word حَفِیٌّ means “someone who deeply researches and investigates something.”

The implication is that contrary to what they think no sane person can go after something which is beyond his circle of knowledge and research.

The words “but most people do not know this fact” imply that most people do not know what a person must go after knowing and what is beyond the bounds of his knowledge. Trying to find out about such things is a mere waste of time and may lead to unwarranted trials. It is strange and unfortunate that people generally go after things which they can never find out nor are they needed to be found out. Then they use this as an excuse to turn away from facts that are essential to know for success in this world and the next. Those who go after the *mutashābihāt* while leaving aside the *muḥkamāt* also suffer from precisely this ailment. I have explained this aspect at beginning of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān’s *tafsīr*.

قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِیْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ اَعْلَمُ الْغَیْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَیْرِ ۛۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِیَ السُّوْٓءُ ۛۚ
اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِیْرٌ وَّبَشِیْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ یُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۸﴾[135]

The implication of the verse is that true and real knower of the unseen is God. Like that of others, the Prophet’s affairs also are dependent on the will of God. He claims to be a messenger of God and not God Himself. So his addressees must not demand from him things which are under God’s will and jurisdiction. He has been blessed with divine revelation and not the keys of the knowledge of the unseen world. Had he been given this knowledge, he would have gathered a lot treasure of all that is good and none would have been able to harm him. Yet people see that he is inflicted with various harms and the good he can acquire is also to the extent of his knowledge of making God happy. The desire of gathering as much good (خَیْر) as possible mentioned in لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَیْرِ is in accordance with the capacity and desire of a prophet. Such is the lofty status of a prophet with respect to his courage and desire that he does not want to leave out any good that he can gather; yet he is aware of good to the extent he has been divinely guided. If he is made aware of all the unknown (*ghayb*), it is quite obvious that he will try his best to get hold of as much good as is possible. However, outside the sphere of divine guidance, he too has to rely on his discretion and depend on his intellect in which both options of success and failure are present.

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[135] Say: I do not have any authority to benefit or to harm even my own self except what God intends. And had I been aware of all the unseen, I would have gathered a big treasure of good and no harm would have ever come to me. I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith.

The words “I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith” are a further explanation of what is said earlier that he neither has knowledge of the unseen nor has absolute power and authority. He does not even have the power to make someone accept faith. Accepting faith is dependent on people’s will and on God’s urge.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ اِلَيْهَا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ
فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۸۹﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰىهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهٗ شُرَكَآءَ
فِيْمَآ اٰتٰىهُمَا ۚ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۱۹۰﴾[136]

The words “it is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it” have already been explained under the first verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’. The implication of “so that it may receive comfort from it” means that the relationship between a man and woman is not an accidental happening. In other words, they did not have any natural affinity for one another and out of mere coincidence they turned out to be of the same species and were able to mutually soothe one another and be in harmony with one another’s needs. Similarly, it was not coincidence that they became a means of producing children. On the contrary, it is as evident as the midday sun that all this occurred by design. God created desire, attraction and affinity in a man for a woman. Then to appease this desire, He created a woman. Such is the deep harmony and consonance in their natural needs and in their internal and external forms that except for a stubborn person none can say that this harmony was created out of its own accord by some force of matter or that they evolved like self-growing trees and then wandering about suddenly met one another and then hugged one another out of this desire and want.

Moreover, this harmony between the two shows that only a single wise and knowledgeable intent prevails in this whole universe. Had this not been the case, such harmony between opposite elements and entities would not have been possible the way it is seen in this universe. Men and women have opposite traits; yet the planner of this universe has made them amazingly compatible with which each other.

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[136] It is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it. So when the man overspreads the woman, she bears a slight burden. Then she keeps moving about with it for some time. So when she becomes burdened, both pray to God, their Lord: “If You grant us a healthy child, we shall certainly remain among those grateful to You.” But when God gives them healthy children, they associate others in what they have been blessed with. Exalted is God from the things they associate.

While reflecting on “and created its pair from its very species,” readers may also keep in mind the discovery of modern science as per which in the beginning human existence was in the form of a single cell like a leech. This unicellular being then divided into two living cells. Later one of them evolved into the male species and the other into the female species.[137]

Consider next the sentence: فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيْفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهٖ. Under verse 134-135, I have explained that the word لَمَّا is also used in the meaning of كلما and اذا. For this reason, here the circumstances of a specific person are not depicted. In fact, those of every individual are portrayed: even though both men and women have been created by God and their mutual affinity and harmony shows that none other has any role in their creation, yet it is a matter of such foolishness on their part that when a child is about to be born to them, they pray to God to bless them with a sound descendent but when they are given what they had prayed for, they attribute this grant to some shrine, saint or idol.

Some people regard this to be a specific happening because of the word لَمَّا. As a result, they had to find someone to whom they could attribute it. Thus they ascribed this to Adam (sws) and Eve and for this fabricated a baseless incident and inserted it into their exegesis. However, not withstanding the fact that Adam is a prophet, what is sufficient to refute the ascription of this incident to him is that what is being stated here is an example of violation of the pledge based on human nature mentioned earlier in verse 172. It is obvious that Adam (sws) was the first person to be part of this pledge and if he proved to be someone who could not abide by it, what can be expected of others?

Consider now the next the sentence: فَلَمَّآ اَثْقَلَتْ دَّعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ اٰتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ. The word صَالِح is also used in Arabic as someone who is fine and is capable. The implication is that when the women fully bears the burden of the child and time to deliver it draws near, both the husband and wife are overcome with worry. In this state, they turn to God alone since in actual human nature only God exists as a deity. Yet when they are blessed with a child they ascribe to others.

This specific aspect of human nature is mentioned at various instances in the Qur’ān that when a person is in real need, he only calls upon the one and true Lord. However, once this need is fulfilled, he regards it to be due to other means and resources. This is such a reality that every person can experience it personally. This is how human beings behave generally and here these general circumstances are stated. It is possible that there still exist some thick-headed people who do not turn to God in any circumstances. Yet even someone like the Pharaoh turned to God when he was drowning, as referred to by the Qur’ān. Nevertheless, exceptions do not nullify this rule. When a person is in real need, he pleads to God in his heart or in both in his heart and through his tongue and also makes this promise that if he is delivered from this whirlpool of problems, he will become a grateful servant of God. However, as soon as this phase passes, he forgets his promise and returns to his previous state. I have dealt with this issue in detail in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk-o tawḥīd* (Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism). Those interested can look it up.

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[137] This information is cited by Dr Rafī al-Dīn in his book *Qur’ān and ‘ilm jadīd.* Unfortunately, I myself am not a student of science.

With regard to coherence, this verse relates to verses 172-174 where the pledge found in human nature is discussed. In between, some verses of warning and admonition were inserted and once they ended, the discourse connects back. It is shown that the real call found in human nature is that of God and people (reference here is to the Quraysh) have shut their ears to this call and are now stumbling about.

The sentence “exalted is God from the things they associate” means that ascribing attributes to God that negate his basic attributes is absolutely illogical. Polytheism – whatever be its type – negates all attributes of perfection in God. For this reason, God is far above all such ascriptions.

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أَيُشْرِكُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَّلَا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ [138]

This verse is an explanation of the last sentence ““‘exalted is God from the things they associate.” God alone is the creator and helper of all. So what is the justification of ascribing such partners to him as do not create and are in fact created and who can neither help others nor their own selves?

وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدَعَوْتُمُوهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتُمْ صَامِتُونَ ﴿١٩٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ
عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ [139]

The implied meaning here is that the greatest need a worshipper has from the worshipped is guidance in every phase of life. However, this is something which the Quraysh never obtain from their idols. Here the word اِتِّبَاع is in its initial literal meaning, ie. مشی خلفه (he walked behind him). This is explained in the first of the above-cited.

The second of the above-cited verses in reality is a challenge similar to the one mentioned in verse 23 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: وَادْعُوا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ (and call all those you associate with God if you are truthful in your claim).

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[138] Do they associate those who do not create anything; in fact, are created themselves! And neither can they help them in any way nor their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not come after you

[139] Whether you call them or remain silent, it is the same. Whomsoever you call besides God are people like you. So call them; they should reply to you, if you are truthful.

The implication is that until then they acknowledged their hypothetical deities the way they wanted to; however, now the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān has thrown a challenge to them. It is now time that these deities come to their rescue. If these they are able to save themselves, it will become evident that the Quraysh are truthful in their claims. It may be kept in mind that the idols worshipped by the Arabs were according to them statues of angels, jinn and stars. For this reason, the words used are “whomsoever you call besides God are people like you.” More details can be looked up in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk-o tawḥīd* (Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).

اَلَهُمْ اَرْجُلٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫ اَمْ لَهُمْ اَيْدٍ يَّبْطِشُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫ اَمْ لَهُمْ اَعْيُنٌ يُّبْصِرُوْنَ بِهَآ ۫ اَمْ لَهُمْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ؕ قُلِ ادْعُوْا
شُرَكَآءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيْدُوْنِ فَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ ﴿١٩٥﴾[140]

Idol-worship has two components. One, those beings which idol worshippers regard to be partners of God and regard them as deities. Two, the stones and statues of gold and silver whose forms they carve out and think that these deities manifest in them and thus become a means and vehicle of worshipping them. This is the philosophical and ideological basis of idol-worship. However, practically what happens is that the masses regard these statues to be everything. So they prostrate before them and present them with offerings and animal sacrifices.

The Qur’ān has taken up both these components of idol-worship and refuted them. In the previous verses, the first component was refuted and in this verse the second is negated. These statues cannot even ward off a fly from their faces and cannot even protect the milk and sweet dishes – that is placed in front of them – from the attacks of cats and dogs. How then can they save their worshippers?

The Psalms point precisely to this aspect in the following words:

> But their idols are silver and gold.
> made by human hands.
> They have mouths, but cannot speak
> eyes, but cannot see.
> They have ears, but cannot hear,
> noses, but cannot smell.
> They have hands, but cannot feel,
> feet, but cannot walk,
> nor can they utter a sound with their throats.
> Those who make them will be like them,

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[140] Do they have feet with which they walk? Do they have hands with which they grasp? Do they have eyes with which they see? Do they have ears with which they hear? Say: Bring all your partners you associate with God. Then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite.

and so will all who trust in them. (Psalms, 15:4-8)

The sentences: “bring all your partners you associate with God; then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite” are a response to the warnings of the Idolaters.

إِنَّ وَلِيِّـيَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ الْكِتٰبَ ۖ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَآ أَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَنْصُرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوْا ۭ وَتَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩٨﴾[141]

The word ولی means “supporter, helper, protector and guardian.” It is mentioned earlier in verses 192-194 that how can these idols help the idolaters when they cannot even help themselves. Whether they are called for help and guidance or not, it is the same; they will neither help nor guide them. Now from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) God’s majesty is stated in contrast to this helpless state of the idols. The word نَزَّلَ means to reveal with an elaborate arrangement. In other words, God has sent down His book in a very thorough and elaborate way. A human being needs God to fulfil all his needs. However, in particular, his greatest need is guidance. It is God Who has made this available for him. So what then is the use of these idols for which they are being worshipped.

The sentence “and those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves” is precisely the same in intent as is verse 192.

Consider the verse: وَإِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوْا ۭ وَتَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ. Here the words لَا يَسْمَعُوْا (they do not hear) actually explain لَا يَتَّبِعُوْكُمْ (they do not follow you) of verse 192.

The words رویت, نظر and ابصار are used with such beauty in the verse under discussion that they reflect the supreme eloquence of the Qur’ān. The implication is: “O People without any Insight! You think they are staring at you, whereas they are not aware of anything around them.”

The singular address in تَرٰىهُمْ actually connotes plurality.

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ إِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوْا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوْنَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا يُقْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾[142]

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[141] My guardian is God Who has revealed this Book and He is the guardian of the righteous. And those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not hear what you say. And it seems to you that they are looking towards you; yet in reality they see nothing.

[142] Forgive, enjoin good and pay no heed to the ignorant. And if you feel any temptation

Now here near the end of the *sūrah*, some apt and appropriate directives are given to the Prophet (sws) and through him to all Muslims.

When the word عفو occurs in the given context, it does not mean to forgive someone by one’s heart; it rather means to ignore someone.

The actual word عرف refers to all those practices which are regarded to be pious and noble in the eyes of all upright people, and in this regard are something known and recognized. Here it refers to monotheism, hereafter and righteous deeds to which the Arabs were being called to believe and undertake respectively in those times. They were entirely based on the evidence of human nature and intellect and are in fact the call of every upright person.

The word نزغ means “to inflict harm or injury.”

The second of he above cited verses states the strategy suggested of how the Prophet (sws) should ignore them and protect himself from their hurt. He should seek refuge with God. His pleadings and supplications are heard by Him and He fully knows his worries and the mischief worked by the devils and miscreants. He will ward off all sorrows of the Prophet (sws).

Though the address in “forgive” is singular, but through the Prophet (sws) it is directed to all Muslims, as referred to earlier. Thus the plural “those who are God-fearing” occurring in a later verse points to this multiple address. This verse also explains the way to seek God’s refuge: people should remember God for this remembrance will create such insight and strength in them that their vision will become absolutely clear and they will see the reality.

The antecedent of the pronoun “these” in “brothers of these” are the “ignorant” mentioned in verse 199. The word “brothers” refer to their compatriots who control them, regardless of whether they are the devils among mankind or humankind.

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِنْ رَبِّي ۚ هَٰذَا بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾[143]

The first of these verses depicts an example of devilish incursions faced by the Prophet (sws) from the disbelievers at all times. The implication is that when the Prophet (sws) does not show them a miracle at their demand they taunt him by asking

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from Satan, seek refuge with God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. Those who are God-fearing, when they are tempted by Satan in any way they direct their attention to God and their hearts light up at once. And those who are brothers of these who do not fear God, they only increase them in error ; then they do not relent in this in any way.

143. And when you do not bring a sign to them, they say: “Why did you not fabricate it?” Say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord. These are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe. And when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be shown mercy.

him that why could he not fabricate a miracle. What these wrongdoers would imply through this statement was that as far as the Qur’ān is concerned, its matter is quite simple: whatever the Prophet (sws) liked from among the incidents of earlier people and from the traditions of soothsayers and the People of the Book, he gathered from here and there and knitted them together into a discourse; he brought forth all this material and recited it out to them with the claim that this has been sent to him by God as a revelation through His special angel. However, now that they have demanded from him a miracle as a sign for his prophethood, he is not being able to present any. This is because putting together a discourse from here and there is something different and showing a miracle is another. This cannot be put together by selecting it from here and there that it may be assembled from somewhere and then be shown to them on demand. In other words, found in this allegation and censure is not merely the blame of not being able to show a miracle but a more poisonous blame in it is that, God forbid, the Qur’ān is a fabrication that has been put together after selecting material from here and there.

The word إجتباء literally means “to choose and select a thing from an assortment.” However, when it is used in the context of sarcasm the way it is here, it means “to fabricate.” Al-Farrā’ has also interpreted the word in this meaning.[144]

The verse: “say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord” is an answer to this sarcasm. Earlier, the Prophet (sws) was also asked to disregard the ignorance of the ignorant. This answer is the best example of this disregard. He should not even take notice of their foolish banter and go on to state the reality in these simple but majestic words: “these are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe.” They are guidance with regard to the beginning and mercy with regard to the end. The part “for those who believe” carries this subtle insinuation that whatever the Prophet (sws) is presenting has no shortcoming; it is their hearts which really fall short because they do not want to believe.

The verse “and when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be shown mercy” states the way to benefit from the guidance and insight provided by the Qur’ān. The verse also hints at the wrong attitude of the disbelievers which they had adopted regarding the Qur’ān. Thus, in verse 26 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah, it is stated: وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَ الْغَوْا فِيْهِ.[145] In other words, the attitude they have adopted is that of ignorance and its consequence is that they will be deprived of mercy. The correct attitude is totally opposite to it: they should listen intently instead of making noise. This attitude will afford them God’s mercy.

One group of our jurists also presents this verse in support of their view that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should be recited by those who pray behind a prayer-leader. However, it is evident that this verse has a different context. Nevertheless, even if this context is disregarded, its words does not support their view; they support the view of those who say that in the loud prayers Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should not be recited while in the silent prayers, it should be recited.

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[144] See: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 14, 130.

[145] And the disbelievers said: “Pay no heed to this Qur’ān. Raise an uproar during its recital.”

وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخِيْفَةً وَّدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۵﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيُسَبِّحُوْنَهٗ وَلَهٗ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۶﴾[146]

Earlier, the way to acquire God’s refuge was explained. Now the way to remember God is mentioned. For this, three things have been stated:

Firstly, it should be in one’s heart and should be with humility, meekness and fear. It is evident from this that arrogance and conceit are opposite to it.

Secondly, if it is to be audible, then it should not be very loud. In verse 110 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl, this is stated as: وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا.[147] This directive was also given to secure one’s self from the way of the idolaters and also because God hears and knows all and not deaf. It may be noted that on one occasion, the Prophet (sws) had stopped his companions from praying in a loud voice. Moreover, this may lead to pretension and showing off, which are totally against sincerity.

Thirdly, one should continuously keep God in remembrance. The words “morning and evening” are meant to comprehensively cover all times. The subsequent words “and do not be among those who are indifferent” further emphasize this. In other words, not a moment should pass without remembering God. Just as for the life of the body, breathing is essential, in the same way, for the life of the soul, God’s remembrance is essential. Satan is ever-ready to launch his onslaught and for this reason human beings even for a moment cannot afford to ignore the protection they have against him. The form of this remembrance changes with circumstances and needs but it is not permissible to forget it at any instant. As soon as a person stops paying heed to this remembrance, he will be attacked by Satan. It may be noted that though the address of the verse is in the singular, it denotes plurality, as in verse 199 earlier.

Consider now the last verse: “Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only.”

This refers to the angels. The verse, on the one hand, depicts the status of those who continuously keep God in remembrance: though such people inhabit the earth, they actually are related to the holy communion of angels. This is because just as the latter are constantly glorifying and praising God, these people too are doing so. On the other hand, this verse is a slant on the Idolaters: they show arrogance because they think that they will receive intercession from angels; they neither give importance to God nor to the Prophet (sws); yet such is the state of these angels that they are constantly glorifying and prostrating before God.

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[146] And remember your Lord morning and evening in your heart with humility and with fear and in a low voice and do not be among those who are indifferent. Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only.

[147] And do not offer your prayer very loudly or in a very low tone; adopt a middle way between the two.

With these words, I come to an end to the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. Whatever I have correctly interpreted is through God’s blessing and wherever I have erred, I bear full responsibility. May God protect me and the readers of this book from its harm. وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
21st Sha‘bān 1388 AH
13th November 1968 AD

Sūrah al-Anfāl

Theme

This is the third *sūrah* of the fourth chapter. It was revealed in Madīnah. It directs the believers to organize themselves on the basis of piety, brotherhood, sympathy and obedience to God and His Messenger and also tells them to prepare for *jihād*. The objective in giving these directives is to make them worthy recipients of the religion of Abraham (sws) and its centre: the House of God. The latter was soon to be consigned to their custodianship.

In the previous two *sūrahs*, it has been shown that the Quraysh are no longer worthy of being the custodians of the House of God because of their beliefs, deeds and morals. In this *sūrah*, attention has been directed to organize the believers as a separate entity and to reform and cleanse their beliefs and practices. It begins by warning weak Muslims on their blemishes in the battle of Badr. These blemishes related to falling short in obeying God and His Messenger and were against faith and trust in Him. The purpose was to make them realize that they must get rid of these weaknesses. After that God's invisible forces that helped them in this battle are referred to so that their trust in Him is strengthened; moreover, people who had until then not become devoted to the cause of God should commit to this and become able to fulfil the requisites of the phases that lie in store. After that, the believes are urged to wage *jihād*. They are promised that if they do not show weakness, then soon the time will come when the conspiracies of their rivals will be exposed. In between, the Quraysh are also warned to learn a lesson from the battle of Badr. Even now, it is better for them if they benefit from it; otherwise, if they continue with their mischief, they will be routed. The reason that they have been treated leniently until then is that the Messenger was present among them. God's established practice is that as long as a Messenger is among his nation, they are not punished. However, now that he has migrated from them, they are no longer secure and God's torment can visit them any time. Their conceited notion that they are custodians of the House of God has no basis. They are not worthy of this because they have not followed the objective for which this House was built by Abraham (sws), and have violated its sanctity. The prayer and worship they offer is nothing but a joke. If they want to remain secure from God's wrath, they must repent and reform themselves; otherwise, they should bear in mind that now they will neither have the chance of inflicting hardships on the believers nor will any other religion except that of God will be allowed to exist in this land.

Further ahead, in the light of the events of the battle of Badr, the believers are encouraged and the disbelievers are warned and the objections raised by the Quraysh after being defeated in the battle are cited. They raised these objections to induce the common man to think ill of the Prophet (sws). Before the battle took place, they presented the weakness and helplessness of the believers as an excuse against Islam. However, after being defeated in the battle by these weak believers, they started another propaganda against the Prophet (sws): how can he be a messenger of God when he is making people of the same tribe fight among themselves, having them killed or imprisoning them and then exacting ransom from them; moreover, he loots and plunders their wealth in the form of spoils of war. These objections could have influenced the weak believers. For this reason, the Qur'ān clarified them and at the end directed the *anṣār* and the *muhājirūn* to maintain their mutual brotherhood ties; both should stand together as a solid wall against the disbelievers.

Though this brief survey of the contents of the *sūrah* is also sufficient to understand its coherence, I will still analyze its meanings to further explain it.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-4): An objection raised in the form of a question by some weak Muslims is cited and briefly responded to. While keeping this objection in consideration, Muslims are told that if they are true believers, they should keep fearing God, cleanse their mutual relationships from malice and envy and obey God and His Messenger in every matter. After that, the traits of true believers are briefly cited and they are promised great reward from God.

Verses (5-8): Another weakness of weak Muslims is referred to. This became evident when Muslims were going out to fight the battle of Badr: they very well knew that the Prophet (sws)'s march against the enemy was meant to fight the Quraysh army who wanted to attack Madīnah on the false pretext that Muslims were going to attack the trade caravan; even then, these weak Muslims started to fear the Quraysh army and they tried their full best that the Prophet (sws) turn towards the trade caravan so that without any threat they can grab the caravan as an easy prey; the fact was that the intention of God and His Messenger was that the truth should prevail and falsehood should be decimated; this could have only been possible if the military might of the Quraysh was routed and not by going after an unarmed caravan.

Verses (9-14): In order to strengthen and encourage Muslims, the invisible help from God in the battle of Badr is cited. As a consequence to the prayer of supplication by the believers, they are told that one thousand angels will be available at hand for them. It is then depicted that the Muslims were able to sleep peacefully in the battlefield and also benefit from the rain sent down. The helping angels are directed to maintain the courage of the Muslims intact and to over-awe the disbelievers and totally rout them.

Verses (15-18): In the light of the afore-mentioned invisible help of God, Muslims are directed to never run away from the battlefield when they encounter the disbelievers. If they do so in the wake of an organized attack, they will earn the wrath of God and the punishment of Hell. It is stated that when Muslims wage war for the cause of God, it is not just they who fight; God also fights with them and gives the believers the opportunities to show their prowess. They have seen this in the battle of Badr. And not just at this instance, in future also, God will not let the plans of the disbelievers to succeed.

Verses (19): The Quraysh are warned forthwith: they used to say that whoever wins this battle will be regarded to be on the truth. They should see that victory has manifested itself. They should not dare indulge in any further mischief. If they do not desist, they should remember that God has not gone anywhere. He will show His majesty to them. They should also fully keep in mind that their huge army is not going to be of any avail to them because God is alongside the believers.

Verses (20-23): Muslims are directed to faithfully obey God and His Messenger. They should not deviate from the Messenger right in his presence. This attitude is actually shown by the Jews: they would commit to obey but would in fact not do so. The worst of animals before God are the deaf and the dumb who do not think and understand. God could not find any ability in them and for this reason deprived them of the yearning to accept the truth. Only those people are blessed with this urge from God who have the ability to be influenced and accept the truth.

Verses (24-26): Muslims are warned that the preaching of God's Messenger is life for their heart and soul. So they should duly value it and accept it. If they show weakness and hesitancy, they should bear in mind that God's established practice forms a barrier between a person and his faculty of intention. Then he is deprived of the urge to do good. In collective life, if people do not try to reform the mistakes made by some specific individuals, then every person good or bad, has to bear their evil consequences. They should not be inflicted with any doubt or reluctance regarding the future of Islam. At one time, they were few in this land. God increased their number and help them. So they should trust God; He will help them in the next phases too.

Verses (27-29): Weak Muslims are warned that after pledging allegiance to God and His Messenger, they should not breach it. The love for wealth and children should not hinder them to fulfil the requisites of love for God and His Messenger. These things are trials. By being entangled in them, they should not waste the great reward which God has reserved for His faithful servants. Those who do not let the love of this world prevail on them will get to know from God what true evil is and will be forgiven by Him.

Verses (30-37): The Prophet (sws) is addressed and reminded of the divine help the believers continuously received against the Quraysh and as a result of which all their plans miserably failed and the plan of God prevailed. They would call the Qur'ān as a tale of the ancients but its warnings to them proved to be correct. They demanded that if Muḥammad is God's Messenger, they will only believe in him if stones be hurled from the sky or some punishment visit them. They regarded themselves to be the custodians of the House of God but they were undeserving of this status. Only people who fear God can be its custodians. The Quraysh who claim to be its custodians have no knowledge of its history or objective. Clapping hands and whistling are regarded by them to be their prayer. What relationship can this jocular activity have with the religion of Abraham (sws)? They audaciously spend in stopping people from the path of God and to defeat Islam; this is a useless activity. All their spending will become a means of regret for them. Now only Hell is in front of them. God will gather all these evil elements and consign them to Hell.

Verses (38-40): The disbelievers of the Quraysh are warned that it is better for them if they desist from their mischief. If they reform themselves, their previous mistakes shall be forgiven. However, if they persist, then they should remember that they will meet the same fate as the one met by the rejecters of the previous prophets. The believers are directed to continue to wage war against them until the persecution they have let lose on the weak Muslims ends and only the religion of God exists in the land and all other religions are exterminated. If these people desist from their evil ways, it is better for them. If they do not, the God is the helper of the believers and He is the best of helpers.

Verses (41-44): The question raised in the first verse of the *sūrah* about the spoils of war is answered in detail. The believers are warned that they should accept this distribution with full contentment of their hearts. To remain satisfied with the decision of God and His Messenger is the sign of true faith and its requisite. They should remember that the success they have achieved is not because of their own planning and effort. In fact, this scheme has been chalked out by God. It was because of His execution of this scheme that the army of the believers reached that end of the valley opposite to which the army of the disbelievers had reached. If both had first given an ultimatum, it would have been impossible for them to reach the enemy at the right time. It was the scheme of God because of which the two met in battle. He wanted a decisive battle to be fought between the believers and the Quraysh so that truth and falsehood become evident as a result. Moreover, this would result in the conclusive communication of the truth to those who want to adhere to the disbelief. Similarly, those who want to accept Islam are provided with a clear argument. It was because of this that the Almighty showed the army of the disbelievers to be small in number in the Prophet's dream. Thus this did not create any fear among the Muslims and they remained prepared to face the enemy with courage. Then precisely because of this reason when the two armies met, the army of the disbelievers was made to appear trivial by God in the eyes of the believers and at the same time they were made to appear less in the eyes of the disbelievers. This made both ready to face one another and participate in a battle that would become a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. The believers should know that the key to all affairs is in the hands of God.

Verses (45-46): Muslims are advised for future: they have seen in the battle of Badr that it is God Who had decisively helped them in it; so in future, if they fight a war, they must do so with full strength and courage and while remembering God – their real guardian. This alone is the path of success. They must fully obey God and His Messenger and not differ in any matter. If they do so, they will be vanquished. The second thing that is needed with obedience is perseverance and resolve. God is with those who persevere in His cause.

Verses (47-49): Believers are told to not follow the ways of the disbelievers who had shown conceit, arrogance and pomposity while entering the battlefield. They showed off their grander and their purpose was to stop people from the way of God. Little did they know that no one has a say against God. The military might and splendour of every army is in His hands. Satan had led them astray by making them believe that no one can defeat them and that he was their companion. However, when he saw the battlefield, he became scared and ran away, right in accordance with his tradition. He felt God's fear in him. This is also a subtle sarcasm on the Jews, as shall be clarified in the exegesis. The hypocrites and the envious would censure Muslims to discourage them. They contended that the Muslims have become indifferent to the consequences because of their arrogant pride in their religion. These hypocrites did not know that great is God's trust. He is powerful and wise.

Verses (50-54): The Quraysh are warned that their defeat in the battle of Badr is just the first instalment of the humiliation that lies in store for them. What is going to befall them after their death is something very horrific. What has happened or what is going to happen is no injustice to them; it is the natural consequence of their own misdeeds. God does not change His attitude with a nation until that nation changes its own attitude. Before them, the nation of the Pharaoh and the others were dealt in the same way by God. When they denied God's revelations, they were warned by God. When after this warning they came even more rebellious, they were seized by God's punishment and were destroyed. Similarly, the battle of Badr was a warning for the Quraysh. If they do not learn a lesson from it, they will meet the same fate as that of the Pharaoh and his nation.

Verses (55-62): The Prophet (sws) is directed to not be lenient to those who dishonour their agreements and whenever an opportunity arises, break them. If he encounters them in a battle, he should teach them such a lesson that those who are supporting them are shaken and jolted too. These people are not beyond the Prophet's grasp. The believers are directed to increase their military might as much as they can so that they can strike awe in the hearts of God's and their own enemies. Some of these enemies are known and some are hidden as yet. Whatever the believers spend in this cause will be fully compensated before God and no reduction would come about. However, if these enemies desire peace, the believers should not evade it and while trusting God should accept it. If in the garb of peace they want to deceive the Prophet (sws), sufficient for them is the God Who specially helped him and through the believers supported him. It is God's graciousness that He has joined the hearts of all the believers for the Prophet (sws) alone could not have accomplished this even if he had spent all the treasures of this world.

Verses (63-65): The Prophet (sws) is assured to not worry if his followers are few in number. Enough for him is God and this small group of Muslims. He should urge and exhort these followers to wage *jihād*. Twenty of his brave warriors are sufficient for two hundred warriors of the disbelievers and one hundred of them will be able to defeat an enemy force of one thousand. War is fought on the basis of faith and determination. These traits are not found in these naïve disbelievers.

Verses (66): This verse was revealed later when people began entering the folds of Islam in multitudes. It depicts a reduction in the essence of their military might stated earlier. Now one of their warriors would be sufficient for only two of the disbelievers. The reason for this reduction was that these later Muslims did not have the same extent of faith as that of the early Muslims.

Verses (67-69): A poignant criticism of the disbelievers raised against the Prophet (sws) is answered. They had contended that how can he be a messenger of God when he fights his own people, sheds their blood, captures captives and accepts ransom from them and by regarding the wealth of his nation to be spoils of war distributes it among his soldiers and himself also becomes its beneficiary. The purpose of this poisonous criticism was to erase the affects of the victory in Badr on the hearts of the common man. The leaders of the Quraysh themselves had regarded this battle to be a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. However, after their own defeat, they had to change this propaganda. Now they started to say that Muḥammad (sws), God forbid, was desirous of political authority, and for this purpose had pitted his own people against one another. A prophet of God can never do this. The Qur'ān has answered this by saying that whatever has happened is not because of the Prophet (sws); in fact, if is they themselves who are to be blamed for this. They are desirous of the pleasures of this worldly life. God and His messengers never have such a desire. Such is the heinous nature of their conspiracy to uproot Islam and the Muslims that a terrible punishment from God would have decided their fate once and for all. However, God has prescribed a certain period of respite for every nation and they are still passing to this period. So instead of being destroyed by a torment, they have been let off after being sounded a warning. After this, the believers are addressed and told that they should not worry about the objection these people are raising about their spoils of war. They can use and consume them; they are perfectly permissible to them.

Verses (70): In this regard, the captives of the battle of Badr are informed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that if God found good in their hearts and if they valued the favour that they were released after ransom, then He will open more ways for them. However, if they were unfaithful and broke their promises and again set out to fight against God, they should remember that God will make the believers prevail over them just as He did in the battle of Badr.

Verses (71-75): Brotherhood is instituted between the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*. All

Muslims who migrated to Madīnah from various territories are included in it. Muslims living in the abode of Islam (*dār al-islām*) have no obligation to help those who do not migrate to them. If these Muslims need help for the protection of their faith, they should be helped provided that any agreement in this regard is not breached or opposed. Now it would be on the basis of faith and migration that rights and obligations would be discharged and help provided. It would not be on the basis of previous familial and tribal relations. However, the basis of the mutual rights of the believers would be their blood relations that have been stated in the Book of God.

Section I: Verses (1-8)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يَسۡـَٔلُوۡنَكَ عَنِ الۡاَنۡفَالِ ؕ قُلِ الۡاَنۡفَالُ لِلّٰهِ وَ الرَّسُوۡلِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَصۡلِحُوۡا ذَاتَ بَيۡنِكُمۡ ۖ وَ اَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ
مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ (١) اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ وَ اِذَا تُلِيَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتُهٗ زَادَتۡهُمۡ اِيۡمَانًا وَّ عَلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ
يَتَوَكَّلُوۡنَ ۚۖ (٢) الَّذِيۡنَ يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقۡنٰهُمۡ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ ؕ (٣) اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ حَقًّا ؕ لَهُمۡ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنۡدَ
رَبِّهِمۡ وَ مَغۡفِرَةٌ وَّ رِزۡقٌ كَرِيۡمٌ ۚ (٤) كَمَاۤ اَخۡرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنۡۢ بَيۡتِكَ بِالۡحَقِّ ۖ وَ اِنَّ فَرِيۡقًا مِّنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ لَكٰرِهُوۡنَ ۙ (٥) يُجَادِلُوۡنَكَ
فِى الۡحَقِّ بَعۡدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَاَنَّمَا يُسَاقُوۡنَ اِلَى الۡمَوۡتِ وَ هُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ ؕ (٦) وَ اِذۡ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اِحۡدَى الطَّآئِفَتَيۡنِ اَنَّهَا لَكُمۡ وَ
تَوَدُّوۡنَ اَنَّ غَيۡرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوۡكَةِ تَكُوۡنُ لَكُمۡ وَ يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يُّحِقَّ الۡحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَ يَقۡطَعَ دَابِرَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۙ (٧) لِيُحِقَّ الۡحَقَّ وَ
يُبۡطِلَ الۡبَاطِلَ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ۚ (٨)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

They ask you about the spoils of war. Tell them: The spoils belong to God and the Messenger. Thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers. Believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, they increase their faith and they trust their Lord only. Those who are diligent in the prayer and spend from what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. (1-4)

A similar situation arose when your Lord directed you to depart from your houses for a purpose and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims. They continued to dispute with you regarding this true matter, even though the truth was fully evident to them. It seemed as if they were being driven to death and they were watching this. Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of the groups. And you wanted to get the unarmed one. And God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it. (5-8)

Explanation

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَنْفَالِ ؕ قُلِ الْاَنْفَالُ لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَصْلِحُوْا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ ۖ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝١ [1]

The word الْاَنْفَالِ is the plural of نفل and refers to what is given as an additional amount beyond what is required. Here it refers to the spoils of war which are acquired in the battlefield from the vanquished enemy by those waging war for the cause of God. This term shows that what these warriors gain is an additional reward besides the one they earn from waging war. This additional reward lies safe with them God as an abiding and abundant prize from Him.

At times a question raised is for the purpose of objection, whether this becomes evident from a word or is concealed in it. Concomitant indications show that here the question has been raised as an objection. This question, as has been referred to earlier, is about the spoils acquired from the battle of Badr. Prior to this, neither did the Muslims have the chance to face the disbelievers in an organized battle nor was the question about its distribution ever raised. This battle took place in 2 AH. God not only granted them a grand victory in it, they also gained a lot of spoils from it. In the pre-Islamic days of *jāhiliyyah*, the convention was that whatever a combatant looted belonged to him. Because of this convention, some people, in particular, weak Muslims raised certain questions that showed that piety, well-wishing and the spirit of obedience to God and His messenger which is a requisite of true faith had not found roots in their hearts. It is evident from these indications that only some individuals had raised these questions. However, this showed the presence of a great evil in the Islamic society. For this very purpose, the Almighty began this *sūrah* from this incident that was meant to cleanse and discipline the believers.

This incident was mentioned in an unspecified way so that this group was not exposed, all the believers were able to accept this teaching in their collective capacity and any notion that is against piety, trust, mutual concern and obedience to God and His messenger is not developed in them.

History and Biography books do mention the details of the nature of the question. Ibn Hishām (*Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, vol. 3, 219) says that after the battle, the Prophet (sws) ordered that all the spoils be collected at one place. Thus this was done and then people started to differ about its way of distribution. Those who collected it

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1. They ask you about the spoils of war. Tell them: The spoils belong to God and the Messenger. Thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers.

claimed their right over it as they thought without their effort it could not have been gathered. They contended that it was they who had made the enemy run away, as a result of which these spoils were obtained. Similarly, those who were guarding the Prophet (sws) claimed that they too could do all of this but they preferred the security of the Prophet (sws) to be their top priority; thus they have a stronger claim on these spoils. So different questions were raised. As a result, some latent weaknesses found in people became evident. It was the sagacity of God that came into action to cure these ailments as soon as they arose so that they are nipped in their buds.

A comprehensive answer to all the questions is stated in the words: "the spoils belong to God and the Messenger." In the Qur'ān, this signifies collective ownership. This principled answer ended the convention of the *jāhiliyyah* period regarding the spoils of war, as a result of which these questions were raised. In other words, the basis of being entitled to the spoils is not the person who collected them or the one who waged war or the one who was on guard. In fact, all warriors, regardless of the nature of their duties, will have a share in it as well as other Muslims too. Once this principle was delineated in the answer, the next verses turned towards reforming and rectifying the weaknesses of the believers that became evident from this incident. Moreover, later in verse 41, details were furnished regarding the share of the warriors as well as the amount that would be consigned to the public treasury.

Consider the part "thus, keep fearing God; reform your mutual affairs." Just as piety and regard for blood ties were regarded as the foundation for the well-being of family and society in Sūrah al-Nisā', here piety and reforming one another was regarded as the foundation of the collective organization of Muslims. The implication is that when the spoils are primarily owned by God and His Messenger, it is up to them how they distribute them and the believers should whole-heartedly accept this distribution. No reservation or ill-thought should arise regarding it nor jealousy be shown to fellow-human beings if they were made its recipients. All Muslims are brothers to one another. The basis of their mutual relations is their brotherhood, blood ties and love. They are a group of noble souls that are an embodiment of mercy and love for one another. Selfishness and envy are against the faith and piety they have adhered to. They should cleanse their feelings towards their fellow human beings and do away with all things that tarnish the mirror of their souls.

The words "and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers" state the real consequence of faith in God. It is contrary to faith to rebel against a directive given by God and His Messenger if it is not in accordance with the desires of people. In fact, such a directive should be whole-heartedly accepted without any feeling of ill-will. The part "if you are true believers" shows that those who lay claim to faith must fully understand the essence of faith. The claim to faith of those who did not understand this essence of faith is absolutely baseless.

اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَ اِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُهٗ زَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّ عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾

الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾[2]

These verses state the traits of true believers. In other words, the portrait of these believers has been sketched before the weak ones referred to in “if you are true believers” of the previous verse. The purpose is to urge them to inculcate these traits in themselves. Without them, it is not befitting to lay claim to faith.

The first trait stated about them is that they have a deep comprehension of the exaltedness and majesty of God. For this reason, they keep fearing Him. Whenever He is mentioned before them or when they are reminded of Him or something is presented before them on His behalf, they listen to it in awe and fear. In other words, the first requisite of faith is the fear of God. This arises because of a true picture of His greatness and exaltedness and of His attributes of justice, wisdom, providence and mercy. It is this that produces the *taqwā* mentioned in the first verse of this *sūrah*. It may be borne in mind that the God’s mercy and providence also necessitate His justice and a day of reward and punishment. Thus the true comprehension of these attributes also does not make a person carefree and indifferent to God; in fact, it increases His fear and the basis of this fear is His love.

The second trait mentioned is that when God’s revelations are recited before them, their faith increases. Concomitant indications show that the revelations here refer to His directives and laws. The implication is that after professing faith in God, they are most desirous of the knowledge of His likes and dislikes and this knowledge increases their treasure of faith. The example of faith is that of a root and the directives and commands of religion are the branches and fruits that sprout from this root. In other words, the whole *sharī‘ah* is a manifestation of faith and an explanation of its implications.

The style in “they increase their faith” also shows when the demands and requisites of faith come before those who have faith, they welcome them whole-heartedly. They regard these requisites to be fruit of the tree they themselves have cultivated. Moreover, just as every farmer is overjoyed to see the produce of his land and fruits of his orchards increase, in as a similar way, these believers are elated to see their increase in faith. This in other words is a subtle sarcasm on those claimants to faith who had made tall claims to it, but when its demands and requisites came before them they were struck with consternation instead of being happy.

It should also be kept in mind that after professing faith whatever small or big requirement of it comes before a believer, it opens up a sphere of trial for him. True believers are not worried on this trial; they in fact try to sail through it successfully. This effort is a natural requisite of the chivalry produced in them by faith. Expending this effort opens new frontiers of victory for them that continue to strengthen their faith. In verse 22 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, this fact is stated thus: لَمَّا رَاَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۫ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّآ اِيْمَانًا وَّ تَسْلِيْمًا.[3]

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[2] Believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, they increase their faith and they trust their Lord only. Those who are diligent in the prayer and spend from what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance.

The third trait of the believers expressed is that they trust their Lord. In other words, whether these requisites are easy or difficult, whether they are beneficial or harmful to their worldly interests and whether relationships are built or severed, they regard success in both worldly and religious affairs to reside in showing obedience to their Lord. So much so, if they have to sacrifice their lives also for the cause of faith, they are convinced that this will give them eternal life. They fully trust their Lord that whatever directive He has given and whatever test He has made them pass through will result in their own well-being. No dealing of God with His servants is devoid of wisdom and expediency, mercy and blessings. This part of the verse too expresses sarcasm on the weak Muslims who wanted to weigh the demands of religion in the scales of their personal interests and regarded everything against their desires to be against expediency.

The fourth trait is actually an amalgam of two foundational attributes: diligence in the prayer and in *zakāh*. They are like a thread that knits together all those traits faith wants to embellish the believers with. In other words, after stating earlier the traits that were needed to reform the referred to weak Muslims, at the end, two things are mentioned which comprehensively cover all these traits and also protect them.

It is next stated that all those who have these traits are true believers. As for those who have infiltrated among the believers but are devoid of these traits, they are mere claimants to faith; they are not true believers. It is as if what was insinuated by the words "if you are true believers" in the very first verse has now become fully evident.

The words "for them are ranks before their Lord, forgiveness and an honourable sustenance" show that this reward is not for all believers but for those only who possess these traits. In this context, the word "forgiveness" is very subtle and carries glad tidings. Evident from it is that though it is all these traits that are required and the ranks given to those who profess with them will depend on how much they adhere to them, yet God is merciful and gracious. He is aware of the weakness of His servants as well. Thus He magnanimously forgives them because as human beings they are liable to err.

The word "sustenance' (*rizq*) is a comprehensive one. It is qualified by the attribute "honourable" (*karīm*). In other words, though all these rewards will be gained because of God’s graciousness, yet the recipients would have earned them.

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[3] And when the believers saw the groups, they said that what has happened is in accordance with what God and His Messenger ad already warned us, and God and His Messenger have spoken the absolute truth. And this only increased their faith and obedience.

It becomes evident from all these details that faith is no barren tree. On the contrary, it has both roots and branches and fruits. In verse 24 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, it has been likened to a tree that has very deep roots and whose branches are vastly spread in the sky. Just as it is based on beliefs, it is also based on directives. Just as a lush tree receives its nourishment both from its roots and leaves and branches too, in a similar way, faith receives strength and nourishment from the comprehension of beliefs and from the carrying out of good deeds. If these beliefs become hollow and barren, this tree will wither away and if its branches are diseased, then too it will wilt away. For its healthy development, it is essential that both its roots and branches are properly looked after. If this is done, it develops and grows strong. In its absence, it shrivels, shrinks and fades away. In my opinion, it is this fact that becomes evident from the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth.

Moreover, there can only be one correct interpretation of what our jurists and scholastics allude to when they say that faith static: they refer to its legal aspect. Law only relates to what is external; what is internal is beyond its grasp. For this reason, in the eyes of the law, there is no difference between the faith of a sincere believer and that of a hypocrite. However, this does not mean that this is true in reality as well.

كَمَآ اَخۡرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنۡۢ بَيۡتِكَ بِالۡحَقِّ ۖ وَاِنَّ فَرِيۡقًا مِّنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ لَـكٰرِهُوۡنَ ۙ ﴿۵﴾ يُجَادِلُوۡنَكَ فِى الۡحَـقِّ بَعۡدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَاَنَّمَا
يُسَاقُوۡنَ اِلَى الۡمَوۡتِ وَهُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ ؕ ﴿۶﴾ وَاِذۡ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اِحۡدَى الطَّآئِفَتَيۡنِ اَنَّهَا لَـكُمۡ وَتَوَدُّوۡنَ اَنَّ غَيۡرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوۡكَةِ تَكُوۡنُ لَـكُمۡ وَ
يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يُّحِقَّ الۡحَـقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَيَقۡطَعَ دَابِرَ الۡـكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۙ ﴿۷﴾ لِيُحِقَّ الۡحَـقَّ وَيُبۡطِلَ الۡبَاطِلَ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ۚ ﴿۸﴾ [4]

Like the words كذالك and كدأبك, the word كماء is also used to express the similarlity of two incidents. In such cases, the compared and the compared to are not mentioned in specific words. They are found in the incident as a whole. In verse 143, the word كذالك has been used similarly. In his famous ode, Imru al-Qays has portrayed a well-known love story and then by the words كدأبك من أم الحويرث قبلها [5] narrates other stories implying their similarity. In verse 151 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the change of *qiblah* has been mentioned. Then without any prior introduction, the words used are: كَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا فِيۡكُمۡ رَسُوۡلاً

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[4] A similar situation arose when your Lord directed you to depart from your houses for a purpose and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims. They continued to dispute with you regarding this true matter, even though the truth was fully evident to them. It seemed as if they were being driven to death and they were watching this. Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of the groups. And you wanted to get the unarmed one. And God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it.

[5] Abū Zayd al-Qarshī, *Jamhurah ash‘ār al-‘arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, n.d.), 80

مِنْكُمْ. The implication is that just as the Almighty separated the *qiblah* of the believers from that of the People of the Book, he made them a separate community.

The كَمَا of the verse under discussion is no different. Earlier, the weak Muslims were checked on their attitude; they had objected on the distribution of the spoils obtained from the battle of Badr. Once this weakness was mentioned, as a requisite of their education and instruction, attention was directed to another weakness. This weakness became evident earlier when the Prophet (sws) had departed from Madīnah for the battle. In other words, at that time their mistake was ignored. Wisdom entailed this. However, when a similar mistake was made again by them, they were admonished. At the same time, the previous mistake was referred to as well so that they get to know the origin of this ailment and what it can lead it if it is not set right.

It is clearly evident from the words "your Lord directed you to depart from your houses" that the Prophet's departure for Badr was at the behest of the Almighty. In verses 42-43, it is indicated that in a dream the Prophet (sws) was shown the approaching caravan of the Quraysh from Syria and the Quraysh army from Makkah. In this dream, it was also shown that in its essence the attacking army would not be much and would in fact be vanquished by the believers. In fact, it is also evident from various reports that in this dream, the Prophet (sws) was also shown the spots where some particular leaders would die. It is in accordance with the directive found in this dream that the Prophet (sws) departed for Badr. The Qur'ān called his departure as "your Lord directed you to depart from your houses." In verse 43 ahead, it becomes evident that it was because of this divine guidance that the believers reached Badr precisely at the right time to face the Quraysh: at one end of the valley was their army while the caravan was passing below it.

The word بِالْحَقِّ shows that this departure was for a purpose. In verse 8, this purpose has been explained thus: "and God, through His words, wanted to grant superiority to the truth and root out the disbelievers so that He could make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood, however much the wrongdoers may dislike it." It is evident from this that from the very start the departure of the Prophet (sws) at the behest of God was for a true purpose. It is obvious that evil could only be rooted out if the Quraysh were humiliated and not by plundering the trade caravan. For this reason, the narrative recorded in books of biography that says that the Prophet (sws) actually wanted to attack the trade caravan that was coming back from Syria under the leadership of Abū Sufyān is totally against the Qur'ān.

The words "and this was very detestable to one group of the Muslims" refer to the group of weak Muslims whose character is under discussion since the start of the *sūrah* and which raised questions about the spoils of war that were discussed earlier. It is evident from the undefined nature of the word فَرِيْقًا that the group was not large in number. When the people of this group would have heard that two factions of the disbelievers were coming and they have to fight one of them, they must have understood that it was the army against which they had to fight and not the caravan. For this reason, they became terrified and this terror was the consequence of their weak trust in God, as indicated in verse 2.

The word مجادلة used in verse 6 means to try to convince the addressees by emphasizing one's point and by presenting various excuses.

This verse depicts the escape route they had tried to adopt when they felt threatened by the advancing army. They would have tried to emphatically and by false justifications convince the Prophet (sws) to go for the trade caravan. They must have made it appear that this suggestion was in the interest and well-being of Islam and the Muslims: plundering the caravan would break the back of the economic lifeline of the Quraysh because this caravan was carrying a large amount of their finances; this wealth would go a long way in solving the economic problems of the Muslims. However, at the bottom of this suggestion was that fear which the Qur'ān has exposed in this verse by saying that it was as if they were being driven to death and they were in fact staring at it. The most dangerous aspect of this suggestion was that they fully knew the intent of the Prophet (sws), as is evident from the words "even though the truth was fully evident to them." In spite of this, they employed tactics of all sorts to persuade the Prophet (sws) to go for the trade caravan. It is evident from the next verse that until then the Prophet (sws) had not clearly expressed his intent because of certain reasons that will be stated later; however, these people were not so thick-headed as to not know the choice of the Prophet (sws) between the advancing army and the caravan. These people were cowards doubtless but they were still clever enough to know that what the Prophet's temperment, the objective of religion and the requisites of making the truth prevail were. How could they have not understood that for looting a trade-caravan the Prophet (sws) would have made such preparations to go out with his companions. Thus it will be detailed out later that neither the leaders of the *muhājirūn* nor those of the *anṣār* had any difficulty in understanding the intent of the Prophet (sws). At the very start, everyone understood his intent and started to prepare for it. It was only one group which continued to make excuses until the end because of the fear of death. For this reason, their attitude was discussed by the Qur'ān so that the believers were fully aware of the mischief that looms in their own ranks.

Consider verse 7: "Recall when God was promising you that you shall take hold of one of the groups." There is vagueness in this promise. It is not stated explicitly that the Quraysh have sent an army on the false pretext of protecting their caravan and that they must go out and fight it and that God will make them overpower it. What is stated is vague: two groups of the Quraysh are coming – one of which will be given to the Muslims. The reason for adopting this style is to distinguish the sincere believers from the hypocrites so that before people embark for a big campaign, it becomes known who stands where. Obviously, if the matter was stated in clear words by the Prophet (sws), both the sincere believers and the hypocrites would have to commit positively. No one could have dared differed with it and hidden weaknesses would have never been exposed. In the battle of Uḥud too, the Prophet (sws) adopted a similar scheme. At that time, he had asked people whether the battle should be fought while being fortified in the city or by going out and he himself did not express his opinion. The consequence was that the sincere elements opined to go out and fight and the weak ones suggested that they should stay in the city. In this way, the Prophet (sws) was able to identify the sincere and the insincere. Details have already been referred to earlier in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl- ‘Imrān. It for the same reason that at this instance too the Prophet (sws) stated his intent in vague terms to find out the thinking of his followers. Hence he first elicited the opinion of the *muhājirūn*. They fully understood his intent. Thus Miqdād ibn ‘Umar (rta) got up and made such a soul-stirring speach that its reverberations will forever be heard in the annals of Muslims. He had said:

> O Messenger of God! Step out to accomplish your suggestion. Wherever you go, we will be by your side. We are not ones who will say to you what the Israelites had said to Moses: go you and your Lord to fight. We will sit here. In fact, our opinion is that both you and your Lord go out to fight; even if one of our eyes is intact, we will be ready to sacrifice our lives.[6]

Can it be even imagined those on whose behalf this speech was made could have even vaguely thought of the trade-caravan?

After listening to this, the Prophet (sws) repeated the words referred to earlier. The *anṣār* understood that this time their opinion was being elicited. Then Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh (rta), one of their leaders, delivered that speech every word of which is like a marital song whose flames of faith still shimmer in spite of the passage of fourteen centuries. He had said:

> We have professed faith in you and we have attested you. We bear witness that only the religion you have brought is the truth. We have pledged a covenant of “to listen and to obey” at your hands. Thus O Messenger of God! Fulfil your intent. By the God Who has sent you with the truth that if you take us to the shores of this ocean and jump into it, we we are with you and we too will jump into it; none of us is going to remain behind. We are not worried at all that tomorrow you will take us to fight against the enemy. We will remain steadfast in the battle. We will prove ourself to be upright in the contest and it may well be that through our hands God show that which soothes your eyes. So with the name of God, give us the chance to accompany you.[7]

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[6] Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabwawiyyah*, vol. 3, 161-162.

[7] Ibid., vol. 3, 162.

Can these speeches be of those who were intending to plunder a caravan which comprised of not more than forty people. If it is deliberated further does it not become evident that in spite of the vagueness present in the referred statement of the Prophet (sws), it was fully clear to both the *anṣār* and the *muhājirūn* what his intention was? However, there was one group of weak Muslims who because of its cowardliness and in spite of knowing the truth wanted to attack the caravan. The caravan was not even armed and they thus wanted to easily waylay and conquer it. It was while addressing these people that it was said: تَوَدُّوْنَ اَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُوْنُ لَكُمْ (you wanted to get the unarmed one). The word شَوْكَة means "a thorn." Here it is used for weapons and then for awe. Since the trade-caravan was unarmed, the words used are: غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ.

Verse 8 states a logical and a natural standard to undersand God's intent. Every directive of God is to make the truth prevail and root out evil. Hence in order to ascertain His intent, even if it is rather concisely stated, this principle must always be kept in mind. Those who desired to attack the caravan did not think that how can God have this intent since it neither makes the truth prevail nor roots out evil and evil-doers. There is a certain amount of vagueness found in the word كلَمَات (translated as "words"). Since the statement given on this occasion was vague, this word was used. It is such statements whose interpretation is difficult. On such occasions, the attitude of the believers should be that they interpret it in accordance with the attributes and majesty of God and not in a way that negates them.

The Qur'ān has made it evident from the words "and root out the disbelievers" that the root of disbelief was the faction of the Quraysh. It was they who needed to be rooted out and God could only have wanted to root it out but one group of the Muslims wanted to take on the trade-caravan.

The words "make the truth prevail and eliminate falsehood" are explaining the purpose of "and root out the disbelievers." God does not have any enmity with anyone; however making the truth prevail and eliminating falsehood is a requisite of His attributes. He has now taken this decision. It shall now be done, even if these wrongdoers do not want it.

The picture of the battle of the Badr that emerges from all these insinuations of the Qur'ān is totally different than what is depicted in books of biographies of the Prophet (sws) and of his military campaigns. The orientalits have made it look even more horrible by exaggerating its accounts.

It is evident from the Qur'ān that the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims had no intention to go after the trade caravan of the Quraysh. It was the Qurasyh who plotted to attack Madīnah and for this fabricated the false pretext of providing protection to their caravan. The Quraysh were scared to see Muslims spreading their roots in Madīnah. Besides religious malice, they also reckoned that from then on the trade route of Syria and Makkah would also not be safe for them to tread. For this reason, right after the migration of the Prophet (sws), they were in search of some pretext to destroy the Muslims before they could become a force. Whether Abū Sufyān (rta), the leader of the caravan, smelled any unfounded danger of a Muslim attack and therefore sent a person to inform the Quraysh of an imminent Muslim attack or the leaders of the Quraysh were already conniving for this – in any case a strong army of the Qurasyh departed for Madīnah at the news given to them by Abū Sufyān (rta). It is in this phase that the Prophet (sws) is informed through a dream that two groups of the Quraysh are coming, one of which will fight the Muslims.

After this, the Prophet (sws) decided to leave Madīnah for Badr and to gauge the extent of the courage found in Muslims presented the whole situation to them in a vague manner saying that two groups of the Quraysh were coming. Muslims will fight one of them and defeat them. As soon as the Prophet (sws) said this, all the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* understood that an army of the Quraysh was approaching and they will have to reckon with it. Thus their leaders assured the Prophet (sws) with full force and enthusiasm that they would remain faithful to him and even lay down their lives for Islam if the need arose. However, there were also a handful of people among them who stressed that instead of the army, they should go for the trade caravan so that they could earn heavy spoils without even shedding any blood. It was to expose this small faction that the Prophet (sws) had expressed the whole undertaking in vague terms so that those in whom some weakness was concealed were exposed and the sincere and the hypocrites among the Muslims were distinguised even before the war.

In the light of the coming verses of this sūrah, it will be shown that the Jews had sought to provide support to the Quraysh for this battle but when they saw what was ensuing in it, they deserted them right in accordance with their tradition.

Section II: Verses (9-19)

In the upcoming verses, the Almighty has referred to His armies that had encouraged and helped the believers at this instance so that this strengthens their faith in the promises of God and in the future of Islam. Earlier the issue of weak Muslims was mentioned obviously to reform the collectivity of which they were a part. Now for this very purpose they are reminded of some more things that would be needed by them in the coming phases. At the same time, the disbelievers of the Quraysh are also warned that the reversal they have suffered is just a prelude. If they continue with this behaviour, they will encounter harder days in future. They had regarded this battle to be a barometer to measure truth and evil and its result is before them. Even if now their eyes are not opened and they continue with their ill-ways, then they should remember that God has not gone anywhere. Their arrogance that has resulted because of their wealth and large number will bear no consequence and they will once again be vanquished. God is with the believers.

Readers may proceed now to study the verses.

Text and Translation

اِذۡ تَسۡتَغِيۡثُوۡنَ رَبَّكُمۡ فَاسۡتَجَابَ لَكُمۡ اَنِّىۡ مُمِدُّكُمۡ بِاَلۡفٍ مِّنَ الۡمَلٰٓـئِكَةِ مُرۡدِفِيۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشۡرٰى وَلِتَطۡمَـئِنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ۚ
وَمَا النَّصۡرُ اِلَّا مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۰﴾ اِذۡ يُغَشِّيۡكُمُ النُّعَاسَ اَمَنَةً مِّنۡهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُمۡ بِهٖ
وَيُذۡهِبَ عَنۡكُمۡ رِجۡزَ الشَّيۡطٰنِ وَلِيَرۡبِطَ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الۡاَقۡدَامَ ﴿۱۱﴾ اِذۡ يُوۡحِىۡ رَبُّكَ اِلَى الۡمَلٰٓـئِكَةِ اَنِّىۡ مَعَكُمۡ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِيۡنَ
اٰمَنُوۡا ؕ سَاُلۡقِىۡ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعۡبَ فَاضۡرِبُوۡا فَوۡقَ الۡاَعۡنَاقِ وَاضۡرِبُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ﴿۱۲﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ ۚ وَ
مَنۡ يُّشَاقِقِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿۱۳﴾ ذٰلِكُمۡ فَذُوۡقُوۡهُ وَاَنَّ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿۱۴﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِذَا لَقِيۡتُمُ
الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا زَحۡفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوۡهُمُ الۡاَدۡبَارَ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَمَنۡ يُّوَلِّهِمۡ يَوۡمَـئِذٍ دُبُرَهٗۤ اِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ اَوۡ مُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ فَقَدۡ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
وَمَاۡوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۱۶﴾ فَلَمۡ تَقۡتُلُوۡهُمۡ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمۡ ۖ وَمَا رَمَيۡتَ اِذۡ رَمَيۡتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى ۚ وَلِيُبۡلِىَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ
مِنۡهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ ذٰلِكُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوۡهِنُ كَيۡدِ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنۡ تَسۡتَفۡتِحُوۡا فَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمُ الۡفَتۡحُ ۚ وَاِنۡ
تَنۡتَهُوۡا فَهُوَ خَيۡرٌ لَّكُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَعُوۡدُوۡا نَعُدۡ ۚ وَلَنۡ تُغۡنِىَ عَنۡكُمۡ فِئَتُكُمۡ شَيۡـئًا وَّلَوۡ كَثُرَتۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾

And remember when you were pleading to your Lord; so, He heard your pleading: I will be sending one thousand angels for your help who will keep coming one after the other. And this was done only that it be a glad tiding for you and that your hearts are reassured through this and help comes from God alone. Indeed, God is powerful and wise. Bear in mind when God makes you doze off from Himself to comfort you and rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan and to strengthen your heart through it and plant your feet. Recall when your Lord sends His revelation to the angels: "I am with you; so keep the believers steadfast. I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers; so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers." This is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God. So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell. (9-14)

Believers! When as an organized army you fight the disbelievers, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them at that time unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army, then he returned with God's wrath. His abode is Hell, and very evil is that abode! Thus, you did not slay them; it is, in fact, God Who slew them, and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it to show various aspects of His majesty and to highlight the feats of the believers. Indeed, God sees and hears all. And all this happened in front of you and God shall humble all the intrigues of the disbelievers. If you want a judgement, then the judgement has arrived before you. And if you desist, it is better for you and if you do it again, We shall also do the same as well. And your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you. And indeed God is with the believers. (15-19)

Explanation

اِذۡ تَسۡتَغِيۡثُوۡنَ رَبَّكُمۡ فَاسۡتَجَابَ لَكُمۡ اَنِّيۡ مُمِدُّكُمۡ بِاَلۡفٍ مِّنَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُرۡدِفِيۡنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشۡرٰى وَلِتَطۡمَئِنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ۚ وَمَا النَّصۡرُ اِلَّا مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿١٠﴾[8]

The words اَنِّيۡ مُمِدُّكُمۡ explain فَاسۡتَجَابَ لَكُمۡ and the use of the *fā'il* in it is to express the certainty of God's promise. The word إرداف means "to appear one after the other." The verse points to the first instalment of help from God. Muslims were very few in number in this battle. They were only 313 of them and were poorly equipped too. On the other hand, the disbelievers were 1000 in number and were fully equipped with all sorts of weapons. In such circumstances, the sole support which Muslims could have relied upon was that of the Almighty. Thus each and every person became an embodiment of humility. To have an idea of the invocations, one only needs to read the supplication of the Prophet (sws) himself mentioned in ḥadīth narratives. It is obvious that when unarmed Muslims had beseeched the Almighty, how could their supplications have gone unheard? Thus they were accepted and they were given glad tidings from God that they should not feel scared; one thousand angels will be sent by Him to help them. The implication is that they should not fear the one thousand strong army of the enemy; they will have one thousand angels fighting by their side. The way they will appear would be in groups one after the other. This psychology of the combatants should be kept in mind that when they receive help in this consecutive way, their spirits are lifted greatly and the enemy on the other hand is inflicted with fear. This topic has also been brought up in verses 125-126 of Sūrah Āl-'i 'Imrān. Readers can look it up.

In the verse وَ مَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشۡرٰى وَ لِتَطۡمَئِنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ the antecedent of the pronoun is the promise of help mentioned earlier. The implication is that if at this instant their Lord had made a promise to them beforehand to help them, then this was purely because they were scared and thus they would receive strength from it and their hearts would receive assurance. Also, they must not think from this that God's help was merely reserved for this occasion. The fact is that whenever believers will go out to wage war for His cause and sincerely seek His help, they will be provided help whether they received glad tidings of this help beforehand or not. This explanation was necessary because in explicit words and at the time it was needed, this promise for divine help could only have been through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) and in his presence; how could the believers receive assurance from it in his absence or when he had passed away. To remove this doubt, it was said that this promise is not merely related to this instance; it is an eternal one for the believers.

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[8] And remember when you were pleading to your Lord; so, He heard your pleading: I will be sending one thousand angels for your help who will keep coming one after the other. And this was done only that it be a glad tiding for you and that your hearts are reassured through this and help comes from God alone. Indeed, God is powerful and wise.

The words “and help comes from God alone; indeed, God is powerful and wise” imply that help always comes or will come from God. Thus, those who trust God, trust Him only. He will always help them. He is powerful and dominant and no one can dare stop Him from fulfilling His intent; however, at the same time, He is also wise. Thus if some calamity befalls the believers at some instance, there is some wisdom in it and there is some well-being of His servants hidden in it. This topic too has been discussed in Sūrah Āl-I ‘Imran while the causes of defeat were being stated.

Some people devoid of insight in current times have opined that this promise was merely to encourage the believers so that they should show courage and fight the disbelievers. In their opinion, after the battle, the Qur’ān revealed this secret that this was said to assure them and it was not something that actually happened. In other words, God forbid, this was a deception by God and later He revealed His own secret. This is so unbecoming a thought to be even entertained.

اِذۡ یُغَشِّیۡکُمُ النُّعَاسَ اَمَنَۃً مِّنۡہُ وَ یُنَزِّلُ عَلَیۡکُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لِّیُطَہِّرَکُمۡ بِہٖ وَ یُذۡہِبَ عَنۡکُمۡ رِجۡزَ الشَّیۡطٰنِ وَ لِیَرۡبِطَ عَلٰی
قُلُوۡبِکُمۡ وَ یُثَبِّتَ بِہِ الۡاَقۡدَامَ ﴿ؕ۱۱﴾[9]

This is the second way in which God helped the believers and refers to the night before the battle. The indefinite tense is used to portray the situation. The sleep has been ascribed to God because it is purely because of His help that it became possible for a handful of people to sleep at night when they were facing a huge army. A very small worry can disturb one’s sleep, let alone the huge ordeal Muslims were encountering at that time. However, those who receive assurance from God can even sleep at their place of execution. Thus Muslims were able to fully rest and became fresh for the battle. I have written under verse 154 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān that sleeping in the battlefield on such occasions is, in the first place, a great blessing but a greater blessing is to *benefit* from it on such occasions. This is because it is not merely sufficient to get an opportunity to sleep; it actually depends on the state of the mind and not every one can achieve peace of mind. Only those are able to reap its blessings on whom God, the Changer of Hearts, grants this comfort from His own grace.

People have generally understood this verse to mean that Muslims slept right at the time when the battle was raging and they were so overcome by it that their swords

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9. Bear in mind when God makes you doze off from Himself to comfort you and rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan and to strengthen your heart through it and plant your feet.

would drop to the ground. However, this interpretation is incomprehensible. In the first place, it seems so strange that the Almighty regard that thing to be gift for the Muslims which actually benefits the disbelievers. What more could they have asked for if right at the time of battle Muslims were overcome by sleep however much short its period may be. Secondly, this interpretation is totally against the Qur'ān. This sleep has been mentioned twice in it. The first is in verse 154 of Sūrah Āli-i 'Imrān and the second is in the verse under discussion here. At the former instance, the words used are: ثُمَّ اَنۡزَلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ الۡغَمِّ اَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَّغۡشٰى طَآٮِٕفَةً مِّنۡكُمۡ‌ ۙ وَطَآٮِٕفَةٌ قَدۡ اَهَمَّتۡهُمۡ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ (then, after this sorrow, God once again let peace descend upon you in the form of a sleep which was overtaking some of you and there were some who were fearing for their lives). In this verse, the "sorrow" mentioned is obviously the one they were inflicted with because of their defeat in the battle of Uḥud. So, when they slept after this sorrow, how can this refer to their sleeping during the battle? This could have only happened after the battle. I have discussed this chance of getting sleep and its significance in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān in detail.

In the verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl under discussion, sleep is mentioned as a help from God that appeared before the start of the battle. Prior to this the glad tidings of the descent of angels were mentioned. Obviously, these glad tidings were given before the battle. The subsequent part of the verse mentions the arrival of rain. Everyone knows that it rained also before the battle. So in between these two, how can something that occurred during the battle be mentioned? In the very sequence of its mention, the Qur'ān has very aptly referred to the whole incident. But the problem is that people seldom reflect on the Qur'ān.

A doubt that may possibly come to mind is that the Qur'ān has used the word نعاس which is used in Arabic for the initial sleep which is not deep; a more apt word for peaceful and deep sleep is نوم. In my opinion, this doubt does not carry any weight. In the first place, at instances of intense worry, it is this initial sleep that one becomes deprived of. If somehow a person can manage it, and is able to doze of a little, he does get some sleep. By His special blessing, God covered the believers with sleep, as is evident from the word يُغَشِّيۡكُمُ. So they were able to sleep. In the second place, in the battlefield or during a journey no responsible person sleeps like a log. At such instances, a person does not sleep deeply. Thus the word used by the Qur'ān is very apt.

The third help provided by God is mentioned thus "[He] rains down water on you from the heavens so that He may purify you through it and turn away from you the whisperings of Satan." Here the words "from the heavens" are very meaningful. It is evident from historical reports that the disbelievers had advanced first and took hold of the fountain. Thus, Muslims were faced with a great apprehension regarding water. By using the words "from the heavens" God assured them that the disbelievers would not be able to deprive them of water because of their evil machination. God is there to help them.

The benefit of water mentioned in “so that He may purify you through it” also reflects the taste of the Prophet’s companions. Faith had changed their values. The fact that a thirsty person needs water is its benefit that every person knows. Even animals are aware of it. In the eyes of the believer, the real benefit of water is that it is a means of purification and cleansing and also a means of warding off the whisperings of Satan. This thing is very dear to God. The companions must have deliberated that more than its need to drink, water was needed to do ablutions and to ceremonially clean themselves after urination and defecation. Similarly, if they needed to take a bath, how would they be able to do so? Thus God specially mentioned these spiritual benefits of water and did not refer its other uses that a body requires because everyone knows them.

Specially mentioned are also “the whisperings of Satan.” Just as flies tend to hover over filth, the whisperings of Satan also increase when a person is unclean. Some Ḥadīth narratives also mention this fact. Moreover, if there is a chance that water may become scarce and that too in a battlefield, Satan can cash on this opportunity to create such despair and despondency that that faith of many may be shaken.

Consider next: وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ يُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْاَقْدَامَ. The expression ربط الله على قلبه means that God strengthened his heart and gave him assurance. Generally people have subsumed this under rain. In other words, they contend that it was because of rain that their hearts were strengthened and their feet were planted. However, I am more inclined to say that these are actually the benefits of the sleep mentioned earlier. Following are the reasons of my view.

In the first place, the repetition of ل in لِيَرْبِطَ is an indication that it cannot be under لِّيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَ يُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطٰنِ. Had this been so, ل would not have been repeated as it is not in the case of يُذْهِبَ. This style is common in eloquent Arabic. Parallels from the Qur’ān and classical Arabic reinforce this. Examples of this can be seen earlier in this *tafsīr*. Thus in verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah it is said: يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيْدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَ لِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا هَدٰىكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ (God desires ease for you and not discomfort. And so that you can complete the fasts and the guidance God has bestowed upon you, you glorify God and express your gratitude to Him). While explaining this verse, I have written that it describes the individual reasons for the directives mentioned earlier. For this reason, each begins with the letter ل and an ascending order sequence is adopted. The purpose of each and every directive is elucidated. On the same principle, the sequence in the verse under discussion is also ascending in nature. Water is mentioned at the end. So first its benefit has been stated first. The benefit of sleep is then stated, as sleep was mentioned first. The letter ل is repeated in لِيَرْبِطَ after earlier mentioning it in لِّيُطَهِّرَكُمْ so it become evident that لِيَرْبِطَ is connected to sleep.

Secondly, peace of mind and heart are clearly related to sleep. For this reason, the Qur’ān has called sleep as اَمَنَةً. It is a fact that if the night is spent in worry and restlessness, the mind loses its focus. If a person wants to go in one direction, he ends up doing in another. In this state of mental consternation, a person is not able to do even a small task in the proper way, let alone fighting a battle and that too with his nerves and physical strength and not with the sophisticated machinery of today. It may also be kept in mind that many classical Arabic poets, while stating their military feats, say that they did not let their enemy sleep at night, as a result of which they have not been able to fight against them with grit and resolve.

إِذْ يُوْحِىْ رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ أَنِّىْ مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ سَأُلْقِىْ فِىْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوْا فَوْقَ الْاَعْنَاقِ وَ
اضْرِبُوْا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ؕ ۱۲ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۱۳ ذٰلِكُمْ
فَذُوْقُوْهُ وَاَنَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۱۴ [10]

The angels referred to here are the ones about whose arrival tidings were given earlier. This army of angels was directly under the command of God and thus it received all its directives directly from Him. The source of these directives was divine revelations sent to them because angels too, in spite of their exalted status, do not have direct access to God.

The first directive given to the army was that since God was with them, they must build resolve in the believers. One thing which is evident from this is that without God's accompaniment, even angels can do nothing. The second thing that becomes evident is that even the angels do not ask the believers to step away so that they will fight on their behalf; on the contrary, their responsibility is to keep the believers steadfast and build their morale. In other words, the real thing is the resolve and steadfastness of the believers themselves. If they display this, they will receive God's help. It is God's established practice that He helps those who first do their due.

Thus the words "I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers" imply that once the believers do what they are required to do, God will play His part. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the real strength of an army lies in its morale. If this morale is intact, a soldier can even fight without weapons and if he loses it, the whole army runs away from the battlefield leaving behind all its ammunition for the enemy. Thus striking awe in their hearts is no ordinary a thing; it signifies breaking the back of the enemy.

The words "so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers" depict the consequence of being awe-stricken. It depicts their utter helplessness. As a long as an enemy soldier has courage left, he seldom gives a chance to anyone to hit him

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10. Recall when your Lord sends His revelation to the angels: "I am with you; so keep the believers steadfast. I shall instil awe in the hearts of the disbelievers; so, you strike at their necks and at every section of their fingers." This is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God. So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell.

anywhere he wants. But when he loses resolve and courage, he becomes a sitting duck. When it is asked to strike someone at specific parts of his body, the purpose is to humiliate him and also to point to his helplessness.

The words “this is because they have sought to fight against God and His Messenger, and those who rise against God and His Messenger, are sternly punished by God” states the reason for God striking awe in their hearts and why they will be totally decimated by the believers. No justification exists in human nature to fight against God and His Messenger. Such a justification only exists when a person wants to safeguard a certain right he has and only in this situation does the courage to fight builds up in him. Obviously, no such thing is found in the case of God. For this reason, those who take up this foolish undertaking may show great resolve for a battle; however, when they enter the contest, they are crushed because their courage has no basis.

Consider now the last part: “So, taste it now and for the disbelievers is the punishment of Hell.” Earlier, the believers were addressed. Now in between, the Quraysh are addressed here. It is an explanation of the stern punishment of God mentioned earlier. In other words, their retribution from God will not end in this world; its real place is Hell for which they must wait.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوْهُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَمَنْ يُّوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ دُبُرَهٗۤ اِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ
اَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۶﴾[11]

The word زَحف means to walk slowly or to walk about on the knees. From here, this word began to be used for a well-equipped and heavily armed army that goes out to fight a battle because it too marches slowly. It may be kept in mind that this usage of the word is not related to today when armies are equipped with heavy machines; it relates to that period when armies would advance on horses, mules and camels.

Two types of warfare were common in Arabia: one was through an organized army attack and the other is what is called guerrilla warfare in current times. The latter meant that an attack would be launched, assets of the enemy would be looted and then the attackers would run away. For this purpose, small contingents would be used and would suddenly launch an onslaught on the enemy and then withdraw to their retreats. There was no fixed principle for this. Anything that could earn success would be adopted.

The matter of attacking through an organized army was very different. It was governed by a principle that was to be abided by both the warring battalions when they met as well as the armies at their back. The verse refers to this type of warfare. Thus to express it, the word زَحْفًا is used so that it becomes evident that it does not refer to guerrilla warfare.

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[11] Believers! When as an organized army you fight the disbelievers, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them at that time unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army, then he returned with God’s wrath. His abode is Hell, and very evil is that abode!

In these verses, the believers are being given guidance regarding future battles they will be fighting. This directive of not showing their backs when the battle is in the form of an organized army attack is a requirement of God's help mentioned earlier: it is forbidden for those who have God and His angels in their support to turn their backs. Those who do so will earn the wrath of God and Hell shall be their abode. It is evident from this that this crime is equal to disbelief and apostasy. Obviously the reason for the intensity of this crime is because a person who runs away from the battlefield at times because of this cowardliness becomes a threat for the whole army, in fact, for the whole community.

The only exception to this is stated thus "unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a part of the army." In other words, what is forbidden is to show one's back to run away from the battlefield.

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوْهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۪ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ اِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوْهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾[12]

The words "you did not slay them" are addressed to common Muslims and the "and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it" are addressed to the Prophet (sws). For this reason, the former are expressed in the plural in Arabic and the latter in the singular. The word رَمٰى has different connotations. They include "to throw an arrow from a bow", "to throw pebbles" and "to throw dust and embers." It is mentioned in narratives that when the two armies met, the Prophet (sws) picked up a handful of dust and while saying شاهت الوجوه threw it towards the disbelievers. This expression signifies a curse in Arabic and since ancient times throwing dust towards someone meant cursing him. This is mentioned in the Torah also and is also found in Arab traditions. Ustādh Farāhī has given its references in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Fīl.[13]

Here a linguistic style must be kept in mind: at times, the negation of a verb is not meant for its negation but a negation of the ascription of the grand consequences which manifested themselves in the wake of the verb: decimating the armour-clad armies of the Quraysh by a handful of Muslims or the transformation of a handful of dust thrown by the Prophet (sws) into a dust-storm that blinded all the disbelievers – all these were not the feats of the blood-stained swords of the Muslims or the throw of the Prophet (sws). These were in fact feats of God’s help that was concealed in the sheaths of the Muslims and in the arm the Prophet (sws).

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[12] Thus, you did not slay them; it is, in fact, God Who slew them, and when you threw dust on them, it was not you but God Who threw it to show various aspects of His majesty and to highlight the feats of the believers. Indeed, God sees and hears all. And all this happened in front of you and God shall humble all the intrigues of the disbelievers.

[13] Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 401-402.

The expression أبلى فلان فى الحرب بلاء حسنا means “he showed great feats of bravery and valour in the battlefield, so much so that everyone acknowledged his mastery. The expression أبلى الله عبادہ بلاء حسنا means “God made their feats prominent.”

The copulative clause (*ma‘ṭūf ‘alayh*) of وَلِيُبۡلِىَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ مِنۡهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا is suppressed as per linguistic principles because it is self-evident from these words. If this suppression is unfolded, the whole verse would mean “so that God shows the majesty of His help and make the feats of the believers fully prominent.”

The attributes of hearing and knowledge of God mentioned here are meant to assure the believers that He is aware of everything. He hears the invocations and supplications of His servants all the time and knows their essential needs too. His help in the battle of Badr is the latest testimony to this.

Consider next the sentence ذٰلِكُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوۡهِنُ كَيۡدِ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ. When the word ذٰلِكُمۡ occurs like this it takes the place of a whole sentence, and the copulative particle وَ ahead relates to the meaning concealed in it. The implication is that these instances of help that have manifested for the believers are the immediate ones; moreover, God will make the plans of the disbelievers end up fruitless. This sentence occurs in exact parallel to verse 14: ذٰلِكُمۡ فَذُوۡقُوۡهُ وَاَنَّ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَذَابَ النَّار . In other words, this is an immediate reversal suffered by the disbelievers at Badr and for the believers it is a great victory that they have notched up. Now, it is Hell that awaits the disbelievers and for the believers are the glad tidings that all the conspiracies of the disbelievers will utterly fail and the religion of truth shall triumph.

It is evident from the word كَيۡد (an intrigue) that the battle of Badr was not the result of any initiative from the believers. It emanated from the conspiracies of the leaders of the Quraysh. They fabricated the excuse of protecting the trade caravan and attacked the Muslims but, as shall become evident from verse 42, the Almighty informed the Prophet (sws) in time and the Muslims got prepared to defend themselves. It is for this reason that the Qur’ān has called it “an intrigue.” It will become evident from verse 48 ahead that the Jews were also a part of this intrigue.

After an explanation of the components of the verses, readers may also now take a look at their context. Earlier, the believers were invited to show valour and bravery in the battle. Its reason has been cited in these verses: why should they be hesitant and turn their backs when it is not they who are waging war; it is, in fact, God Who is fighting on their behalf; it is He Who fights but He also provides an opportunity to Muslims to show feats of valour and obtain success both in this world and the next.

اِنۡ تَسۡتَفۡتِحُوۡا فَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمُ الۡفَتۡحُ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَنۡتَهُوۡا فَهُوَ خَيۡرٌ لَّكُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَعُوۡدُوۡا نَعُدۡ ۚ وَلَنۡ تُغۡنِىَ عَنۡكُمۡ فِئَتُكُمۡ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَوۡ

كَثُرَتۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰہَ مَعَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[14]

This verse directly addresses the believers. It may be kept in mind that at this instance, inebriated with their large number, the leaders of the Quraysh delivered vehement speeches one after the other. Since they were fully convinced of their victory, they regarded this battle to be a decisive barometer between truth and falsehood. They contended that they would whole-heartedly accept whatever verdict this battle gives. Abū Jahal was the most active in instigating the battle. He is reported to have uttered this invocation (Lord! Destroy the one among us who is the most guilty of breaking familial ties). It was because of this arrogance of the Quraysh that the Qur'ān has stated in this verse that the verdict they were waiting for has arrived. In verse 41 ahead, the Qur'ān has called it یَوۡمَ الۡفُرۡقَانِ (the day of verdict) for this very reason. It will also become from verse 32 ahead that the Quraysh would stubbornly contend that if Muḥammad's message has truth in it, let God hurl stones on them or some punishment visit them, after which they will believe in him.

The words "and if you desist, it is better for you" are both a council and a rebuke. The implication is that it is better that they learn a lesson from the outcome of this battle. If they do not, then they should remember that they will not harm God in any way; they will only call for their own doom. The subsequent words "We shall also do the same as well" form an open threat and so do the ones following them "and your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you." If they are more in number, the inferno of God will burn even more, as they will act as its firewood.

The last part "and indeed God is with the believers" is the real soul of this whole verse and these few words contain a whole world of threats for the disbelievers and glad tidings for the believers. It says that whoever wants to come and fight should come now and gather as many people as he can in support; God's support lies with the believers! May God be praised.

Section III: Verses (20-28)

The ongoing subject of instructing, purifying and reforming the believers continues with its gradual revelations in the succeeding verses. The believers whose weaknesses are the cause of what is said are openly threatened. Moreover, the Muslims society as a whole is also informed that it should be on guard. Good and evil both are found in the society. If some people tried to spread some mischief in the society and others did not try to stop them, then ultimately this mischief will embrace everyone whether good or bad. The believers are urged to not follow the ways of the Jews who would claim before their messenger that they accepted when, in fact, they had not. Muḥammad (sws) is inviting them to true life. They should whole-heartedly follow it. Those who do not open their hearts to his preaching even after listening to it and understanding it will find the law of God become a barrier between them and their hearts. After that, these hearts are sealed forever.

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[14] If you want a judgement, then the judgement has arrived before you. And if you desist, it is better for you and if you do it again, We shall also do the same as well. And your group, however large it may be, shall not be of any benefit to you. And indeed God is with the believers.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ لَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَ هُمْ لَا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَ لَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ ؕ وَ لَوْ
اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّ هُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَ لِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۚ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَ قَلْبِهٖ وَ اَنَّهٗۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَ اتَّقُوْا فِتْنَةً لَّا تُصِيْبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْكُمْ خَآصَّةً ۚ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَ اذْكُرُوْۤا اِذْ اَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَ
اَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَ رَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَخُوْنُوا اللّٰهَ وَ الرَّسُوْلَ وَ تَخُوْنُوْۤا اَمٰنٰتِكُمْ
وَ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّمَاۤ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَ اَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۙ وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

Believers! Obey God and His Messenger and do not evade his call when you are listening. And be not like those who claim: "We listened," but they never listened. Before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect. And had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion. (20-23)

Believers! Respond to the call of God and the Messenger when the Messenger is inviting you to that which gives life to you and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone. And keep fearing the trial with which the wrongdoers only shall not be afflicted and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution. (24-25)

And recall when you were small in number and weak in the land; you would fear that people might get hold of you. Then God gave you refuge and blessed you with His help and granted you noble sustenance so that you may be grateful. Believers! Do not be insincere to God and His Messenger and do not be deliberately dishonest in what is entrusted to you. And bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial and that great reward lies with God alone. (26-28)

Explanation

يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ
اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾[15]

The address in the opening words is though general in nature but it is directed to weak Muslims and the believers who are under mention since the beginning. This is a common style of the Qur'ān in which such elements are warned in an indirect way so that they are not humiliated and also they are provided with an opportunity to mend their ways. As for the good ones, they nevertheless do benefit from it. In other words, the mistakes of others provide them with a further chance to increase their knowledge and polish their deeds.

The verb "obey" is used in the verse in its ultimate sense. The actual meaning would be that believers should obey God and His prophet in the most befitting way that is entailed by their faith. The words "when you are listening" in "and do not evade their call when you are listening" point to the grave nature of their attitude. In words, what will become of them in future, if they stumble in the presence of the messenger? Those who fall down in broad daylight have no excuse for this fall. The antecedent of the pronoun in عَنْهُ is the Messenger though earlier both God and the Messenger are mentioned. It is evident from this that evading the Messenger is tantamount to evading God: the only means to connect with God and to obey Him is through His messenger.

Everyone who is a connoisseur of the Qur'ān knows that the words "and be not like those who claim: 'We listened' but they never listened" refer to the Jews. In Sūrah al-Baqarah (verse 93), the Qur'ān has clearly stated that the Jews would say "we listen and we obey" and whereas actually their attitude reflected "we listen and we do not obey." The Qur'ān has also specified that this attitude was in the presence of the Prophet (sws). In other words, it is insinuated to these hypocritical Muslims that this behaviour they have adopted is not in consonance with obeying the Messenger; it is akin to obeying the Jews. If they lay claim to faith, they must not follow the ways of this nation that has earned God's wrath.

Though the harshness in the tone was evident in the previous part of the verse, it has become very evident from "before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect." The implication is that if even after hearing they do not listen or use their intellect and also do not follow what the Prophet (sws) says,

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[15] Believers! Obey God and His Messenger and do not evade his call when you are listening. And be not like those who claim: "We listened," but they never listened. Before God the worst of animals are these that are deaf and dumb who do not use intellect. And had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion.

then in the sight of God they are the worst of animals. At several instances, the Qur'ān has called Idolaters as well as the Jews and the Christians as the worst of animals because they had refused to listen and understand. Obviously, the group which will follow their ways will be regarded among them. It has been mentioned elsewhere that the real distinguishing feature of a human being is his faculty of intellect. Without it, he becomes a two legged beast and that too the worst. This is because an animal however bad it may be still follows its instinct. This has its own utility in its background. However, if a human being loses this distinguishing feature, then even Satan accepts defeat before him. On the other hand, if he uses his intellect and insight, he climbs the highest of summits, and if he is without it, he plunges into the deepest of pits.

The words "and had God seen any good in them, He would have definitely given them the urge to listen and if He had made them listen without the ability, they would have turned their faces in evasion" are meant to dispel a doubt that may arise forthwith: if a such is the importance of this faculty and such is the dislike of God when a person does not use it that he becomes worse than an animal, then why does not God use His power to open his mind and heart and revive his intellect? The answer is that had He found this ability in them, He would definitely have provided them the urge to understand. Since, this was not the case, He never did so. This actually is a reference to God's established practice of providing guidance to human beings: He has provided every person the ability to distinguish good from evil. Those who keep this ability intact and use it are guided further and they gradually develop in knowledge and deeds. On the other hand, those who waste this natural ability endowed to them by their creator, then per this practice, whatever guidance they already have is also taken away, let alone being given new one. Jesus (sws) while referring to this fact has very subtly said: Why would a master trust a slave with a thousand coins if he has proven dishonest in one coin.

So if God had injected guidance in them without this ability, their natures would have repelled it and it would not have found roots in them. Food may have the ability to provide nourishment; however, if the stomach is not functioning, it will not accept it. If something is ingested, it would be soon thrown up. Similarly, for the development of a plant, it is not just its healthy seed that is needed; also needed is a ground that has the ability to make it grow. If a farmer sows the seeds of the best of plants in a barren piece of land, it will not prosper beyond a few days. It will wither away because it will not receive the required nourishment. Precisely same is the case with the seed of virtue and vice. It develops according to its potentials only in those human natures which are upright. If this upright nature becomes corrupt, a seed can still be planted by in it by God but it is God's law too that it will not develop.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهٗٓ

اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[16]

It has been mentioned earlier that the distinguishing feature of a human being is his insight and intellect and real life is the life of his heart and his soul. If he loses the ability to contemplate the truth and refuses to accept it, he is actually dead with respect to his purpose of creation. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has called the disbelievers as dead. The call of God and His Messenger is the call towards real life. It is only by accepting it that sight is blessed with insight and intellect receives the light that unveils for it the secrets of the world around him. Through it, the heart receives the life which transforms a lump of meant into a repository of divine disclosures. It is precisely while referring to this fact that Jesus is reported to have said: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew, 4:4)

The words "and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone" form a very harsh warning to those who do not value the vibrant call towards righteousness, especially from a messenger of God and become deaf and dumb. God becoming a barrier here means God's law become a barrier. At times, things that happen because of God's law and practice are ascribed to God Himself. Under verse 7 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, more details can be seen. The implication is that the hearts of these people run amok and can never be controlled. When a person starts to indulge in vices, then until a certain limit he can still turn back if he pays heed; however, when this limit is crossed and he does not have the urge to control and discipline his heart, then he becomes helpless before it. The call of a messenger, as is mentioned earlier, is the most effective call to open the eyes, ears and hearts. Thus, those who turn away from this call, are subjected to this law of God as per which their hearts are sealed.

In this verse, the Qur'ān has actually warned weak and hypocritical Muslims. They are told that they still have the time to mend their ways. Otherwise, their hearts will be sealed. They will be tarnished to such an extent that it they will never be able to regain their lustre. Moreover, they must also remember that this situation is not going to be just confined to this world; one day they will have to face God and therefore they must think about its consequences too.

وَاتَّقُوْا فِتْنَةً لَّا تُصِيْبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْكُمْ خَآصَّةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۲۵﴾[17]

This verse addresses the whole society in general and those elements in particular who were more concerned to reform their own selves and did not have much concern

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[16] Believers! Respond to the call of God and the Messenger when the Messenger is inviting you to that which gives life to you and bear in mind that God becomes a barrier between a person and his heart, and bear in mind that you shall be gathered to Him alone.

[17] And keep fearing the trial with which the wrongdoers only shall not be afflicted and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution.

about how others behave. It is such people who are shaken and jolted. They are told that they must not remain indifferent to evils found in their society. They should try their best to set them right because if some evil deed becomes rampant in a society, it becomes an endemic. In such a case, its evil effects are not merely to confined to its perpetrators; they also engulf those who remained silent and indifferent to it.

The Prophet (sws) has explained this fact through the parable of the travellers of a ship: consider a ship which houses some travellers on its deck and some below the deck; the ones living below the deck thinking that they would have to bear the hardship to go on the deck to fetch water start digging a hole in its lower part; however, the ones living on the deck remain indifferent to this act, then the ship is bound to sink because of what the ones below the deck are doing.

For this reason, it has been made an obligation on people by the religion of God to stop others from evil. The Prophet is reported to have said: “When any person among you sees an evil [in his circle of authority], he should try to curb it by [the force of] his hands. If he does not have the faith to do it, he should try to curb it by his tongue and if [even] this is not possible, he should consider it bad in his heart and this is the lowest level of faith.” (Muslim, vol. 1, 69, (no. 49))

It we study the context of this verse, it becomes evident that there was one group who claimed to accept the truth through their tongues but did not have the strength to fulfil its demands. It is for such people that it was said that if they do not mend their affairs, the law of God becomes a barrier between them and their hearts. The second group was the one that accepted the truth but they do not have so much attachment to it so as to bear the anger of others for its cause. These people were warned that if some vice spreads in a society, then even they themselves will not be protected from its evil consequences. Only they will remain protected who will continue to enjoin righteousness as far as possible regardless of whether anyone listens to them or not and whether anyone is happy with them or not.

The words “and keep in mind that God is stern in retribution” refers to the unbiased and relentless nature of the law of retribution. In other words, just as the laws of God are relentless in the physical realm, they are inexorable in the moral realm too. Just as a person who breathes in an impure atmosphere is influenced by it if he does not take the necessary precautionary measures, similarly a person living in bad company comes under its influence, if he does not keep in consideration the afore-mentioned conditions. In this matter, the law of God is the same for all and is impartial too.

وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ اَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[18]

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[18] 18. And recall when you were small in number and weak in the land; you would fear that people might get hold of you. Then God gave you refuge and blessed you with His help and

The obedience to God and His Messenger with which this discourse began is reinforced here. This is done by God recounting his favours. The purpose is to make them realize that the God and His Messenger who are inviting them towards the truth have helped them at every step in the past. All these favours entail that they show gratitude to God and become useful members of His religion. They should not fear any danger that they may encounter on this path. He Who has dealt with them in such a befitting way in the past will continue to help them in the future also.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَخُوْنُوا اللّٰهَ وَ الرَّسُوْلَ وَ تَخُوْنُوْۤا اَمٰنٰتِكُمْ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّمَاۤ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَ اَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۙ وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۲۸﴾[19]

This verse is in exact parallel to the directive which is mentioned in verse 24. What is said in an affirmative way in that verse is stated here such that people are stopped from indulging in its opposite. Moreover, the obligation of gratitude mentioned earlier must be kept in mind and must becoming ungrateful should be abstained from. It must be kept in mind that the real essence of gratitude is to recognize the right of God, to acknowledge it and to fulfil it with sincerity. The obvious requisite of this is that a person must not be insincere to God and His Messenger after pledging obedience to them. He should always fulfil this promise because every promise is a trust and it is dishonesty to breach it, whether openly or secretly.

The style adopted in وَ تَخُوْنُوْۤا اَمٰنٰتِكُمْ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ is the same as in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَ لَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَ تَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ (do not mix truth with falsehood and hide the truth deliberately). It was shown there that if the particle of negation is not repeated, it is an indication that hiding of the truth is a natural consequence of mixing truth and falsehood. Similar, is the case here. Though this sentence is governed by the particle of negation in لَا تَخُوْنُوا اللّٰهَ وَ الرَّسُوْلَ but this particle has not been repeated in it. It is evident from this that it is insincerity with God and His Messenger that opens the way to insincerity with people with regard to responsibilities and trusts.

The word أمانت has been discussed in detail in verse 58 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ that it is mentioned in the Qur’ān in a very broad meaning. Included in its connotation are all rights and responsibilities whether they are imposed because of some covenant or logically and naturally come under them as well as all potentials and favours with which human beings are blessed with. It is said that these trusts should not be deliberately breached.

The condition “deliberately” is meant to reprimand people who are referred to here.

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granted you noble sustenance so that you may be grateful.

[19] Believers! Do not be insincere to God and His Messenger and do not be deliberately dishonest in what is entrusted to you. And bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial and that great reward lies with God alone.

However, it is a separate fact that an act becomes a crime in the eyes of God when it is done intentionally after knowing that it is wrong.

The words "and bear in mind that your wealth and your children are a trial" point to the real ailment in this regard and why people become slack in their obedience to God and His Messenger. When the love of wealth and children prevails on a person to the extent that he begins to shirk responsibilities and evade obligations related to the being Who actually blessed them with wealth and children, then the latter become a trial.

It is the over-blown love of wealth and children that lies at the base of insincerity with God and His messenger and in shirking the responsibilities owed to others. Viewed thus, it is the largest door that leads to hypocrisy. Precisely for this reason, wealth and children are called a trial. The way to protect one's self from this trial is that a person keeps in remembrance that great reward which God has preserved for those who are not insincere to Him and His Messenger because of love and wealth. In fact, if there is a clash at some instance between earning the pleasure of God and His messenger and between love for wealth and children, they give preference to the former. Thus, it is stated that for such people there is a great reward.

Section IV: Verses (29-40)

In this section, first the believers are encouraged. They are told that if they resolutely abide by their promise with God and not show weakness by being overcome with the love for wealth and children, then soon the time will come when He will make the *furqān* manifest itself for them. At the same time, all veils which are today blocking the truth from becoming evident to them will be lifted.

After that, the effective scheme of God is referred to which He employed to save His messenger from the unanimous conspiracy of the disbelievers and to open his way for migration. This migration became the prelude to the dominance of Islam and a decisive step in the contest between truth and evil. Until then, the disbelievers were making fun of the warnings sounded by the Qur'ān. They used to say that if the preaching of the Prophet (sws) is from God, why does He not punish them for not accepting it? The reason that this does not happen is that as along as a Messenger remains among his people, God does not send any punishment to them. However, once this happens and the Messenger and his companions migrate from these people, no such restriction remains.

After this, reasons which have made the disbelievers worthy of punishment are stated. They think that it is because of their efforts that God's religion is rooted in the society. They conceitedly think that they are the custodians of the House of God and also observe religious practices. It is said that time has come that this arrogance of theirs shall see its end. Soon the efforts they are undertaking to stop people from

God's religion and to defeat it will become a yearning from them. They will be defeated in this world and in the Hereafter God will gather them and throw them into Hell.

At the end, the Quraysh are warned: it is better if they change their ways and accept the Prophet's message; otherwise, they should remember that they will encounter the same fate as the one encountered by those who earlier denied their messengers. At the same time, the believers are directed to continue to wage war against them until the persecution they are guilty of is done away with and no religion except that of God remains in the land. God will help and support them.

Readers my now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَّيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَ
اِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِيُثْبِتُوْكَ اَوْ يَقْتُلُوْكَ اَوْ يُخْرِجُوْكَ ؕ وَيَمْكُرُوْنَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى
عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالُوْا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هٰذَاۤ ۙ اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاِذْ قَالُوا اللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا
هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ ؕ وَ
مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوْۤا
اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ؕ اِنْ اَوْلِيَآؤُهٗۤ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقُوْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ اِلَّا مُكَآءً وَّتَصْدِيَةً ؕ
فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَسَيُنْفِقُوْنَهَا ثُمَّ
تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ ۙ لِيَمِيْزَ اللّٰهُ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ
الْخَبِيْثَ بَعْضَهٗ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهٗ جَمِيْعًا فَيَجْعَلَهٗ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِنْ يَّنْتَهُوْا
يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّعُوْدُوْا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ كُلُّهٗ
لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ؕ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ﴿٣٠﴾

Believers! If you keep fearing God, He will manifest the *furqān* for you, brush away your sins from you and pardon you. And God is immensely bountiful. Bear in mind the time when the disbelievers were conspiring in your matter: to imprison you or slay you or banish you. They were conspiring and God was also making His scheme and God is the best of schemers. (29-30)

And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: "We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients." And remember when they said: "God! If this is the truth from you, hurl down stones on us from the heavens or bring upon us some other painful punishment.

And God would not have punished them when you were among them. And God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness. And why should He not punish them when they stop [people] from the Sacred Mosque, even though they are also not its custodians. Its custodians can only be those who fear God. But most of them do not know this fact. And their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping. So, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of. (31-35)

Those who are guilty of disbelief are spending their wealth to stop [people] from the path of God. They will be spending it; then it will become a yearning for them. Then they will be vanquished and these disbelievers will be gathered and driven towards Hell so that God may separate the pure from the impure and heap the impure over the impure; then cast this heap into Hell. It is these people who shall end up as losers. (36-37)

Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed. And keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God. Thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do. And if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian. What a wonderful guardian and what a good helper. (38-40)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجۡعَلۡ لَّكُمۡ فُرۡقَانًا وَّيُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡكُمۡ سَيِّاٰتِكُمۡ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الۡفَضۡلِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿۲۹﴾[20]

"*Furqān*" means everything which distinguishes good from evil. This distinguishing thing can be internal as well as external and also ideological and intellectual. Moreover, it can also be an event and something practical. In verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the Qur'ān also regards proofs and arguments to be "*furqān*" because through them it distinguishes good from evil. For the Qur'ān and of the real Torah also, this word has been used at more than one instance for precisely the same reason. Similarly, in verse 41 of this *sūrah* the battle Badr is regarded as "*furqān*" because this battle showed who was on the right and who on the wrong.

In the verse under discussion, the believers are being promised that if they strongly adhere to a God-fearing attitude, which in other words means that they are not insincere to God and His Messenger, then God will soon make the truth prevail. The clouds of doubt that at the moment loom will be steered away and the truth will shine in such a way that it will daze the eyes of the enemy. Concomitant indications show that here the word "*furqān*" is referring to the dominance of Islam and the Muslims. Though one "*furqān*" had already appeared in the battle of Badr before the Muslims, forces of evil were still present all around them. For this reason, one of their groups was inflicted with doubt and reluctance and it was this reluctance that would in turn inflict them with the weaknesses mentioned earlier. The verse actually addresses such reluctant Muslims.

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[20] Believers! If you keep fearing God, He will manifest the *furqān* for you, brush away your sins from you and pardon you. And God is immensely bountiful.

The word سَيِّاٰتِ refers to minor sins which people are prone to as human beings. In other words, if people do not commit major sins, God will not hold them accountable for minor ones because He is a very gracious.

وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ ۚ وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾[21]

The literal meaning of أثبات is “to stop someone” and “to restrict someone” which also includes “to imprison someone.”

This is a reference to the conspiracy hatched by the Quraysh at the Dār al-Nadwah to uproot forthwith the preaching endeavour of the Prophet (sws). Different leaders presented different suggestions. It is evident from books of history and biographies of the Prophet (sws) that after discussion the suggestion to kill him was adopted. The strategy adopted for this was that all the families of the Quraysh would participate so that the Prophet’s family does not have the courage to demand *qiṣāṣ*.

The word مکر has been discussed in detail in verse 54 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. I had explained there what it means when it is spoken with reference to God. One aspect of God being the best of schemers is that His scheme always prevails on others. The second aspect is that though the enemy may regard this scheme to be its victory, it ultimately culminates in opening many doors of victory of the truth. The best example of this is the incident of migration. The Quraysh heaved a sigh of relief at the Prophet’s departure but events soon proved that this departure became the prelude to the widespread dissemination of Islam in the free environment of Madīnah and the Quraysh could only helplessly wait for their fate, as will become evident from the verses ahead.

Here the purpose of reminding the believers of this promise was to reinforce the promise of manifestation of the “*furqān*” mentioned in the previous verse. The implication is that if people want to see how God turns unfavourable circumstances into favourable ones, they need not look far. The life of their Prophet (sws) bears its greatest testimony. There was a time when the fate of Islam hung only with the noble Prophet (sws) and his few followers. So the Quraysh decided to kill him and hatched a unanimous conspiracy to achieve this goal. But such was the scheme made by God that the Prophet (sws) deceived his enemy in leaving Makkah and no one could even touch him. Then it was not just the Prophet (sws) who departed, future events showed that the sun of success shone brightly on him and his followers. The Quraysh

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21. Bear in mind the time when the disbelievers were conspiring in your matter: to imprison you or slay you or banish you. They were conspiring and God was also making His scheme and God is the best of schemers.

reckoned that the Prophet's (sws) exile to an alien land would sound the death-knell for his message. However, God's measures and plans showed that the most fertile and helpful land for the development of Islam was Madīnah towards which the disbelievers themselves pushed Muslims to go. Thus does God realize His schemes. Enemies think that they have won the battle but in reality it is the strategy of God that succeeds. Whenever He intends, He uses the enemies to accomplish the very task of reaping victory for the truth and destroying the enemy. Ultimately, the truth prevails and the enemy is vanquished. So they should not be scared of the prevailing unfavourable circumstances. They should trust "the best of schemers." From the darkness they are facing soon the dazzling sun of truth will emerge as a "*furqān*."

This verse address the Prophet (sws) as is evident from the words وَ اِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ. However, with regard to its occasion and meaning, it has two aspects. In one aspect, it is connected with the previous topic and in the other it is a prelude to a forthcoming topic. In this forthcoming topic, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that if until then the Quraysh were demanding punishment and God was ignoring them, then its reason was not that God was helpless. It was because the Prophet (sws) was present among them. However, once he has migrated from them, what can save them from the lash of this punishment? They themselves have deprived themselves of this immunity. Since, at this precarious instance, God wanted to let the Prophet (sws) know of the status he has in His eyes, the Prophet (sws) was directly addressed in deference to eloquence. He should not be sad if they have turned him out because their life-line was in his hands. They will now see how God humiliates them. At the same time, glad tidings of the afore-mentioned "*furqān*" were given.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالُوْا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هٰذَآ ۙ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَاِذْ قَالُوا اللّٰهُمَّ
اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۳۲﴾[22]

The content of this verse has also been discussed in verse 93 of Sūrah al-An'ām. Here these verses occur in a certain background: the Quraysh would continuously challenge God to send punishment and would also arrogantly harass the Prophet (sws); but God did not do so, as a result of which they became even more audacious in their demand. They became even more adamant that their falsehood is actually the truth. Because of their arrogance they failed to understand why they were given respite in spite of asking for punishment. Today they should hear the clear answer to this question.

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[22] And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: "We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients." And remember when they said: "God! If this is the truth from you, hurl down stones on us from the heavens or bring upon us some other painful punishment.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾[23]

This is the answer to the question mentioned earlier. Since the purpose here is to specially show affection to the Prophet (sws), he is directly addressed. The verse actually points to the established practice of the Almighty before He sends His punishment to a Messenger's nation: as long as a Messenger is present among his people, he is like their heart. He prays to the Almighty for their forgiveness and also invites them to seek forgiveness. His presence among them shows that they sill have signs of life left in them. His message gives life to those who have the ability to accept a life of faith. His seeking of repentance for his nation becomes a shield for them. However much, the miscreants among it spread mischief and however much may they challenge God and His messenger, they are forgiven by the Almighty. If ever He does inflict them with a calamity, it is just to warn them and it is never in the form of a decisive punishment to them. However, when a nation crosses its limits and starts making plans to kill the messenger and the righteous are inflicted with extreme hardships too, the Almighty directs His messenger and his companions to migrate. After that, his nation loses the immunity it formerly enjoyed because of the blessed presence of the messenger and his companions. Thereafter, either of the two situations necessarily arises: if only a few people profess faith in the messenger, the nation is punished directly by God through some natural disaster once the messenger and his companions leave it. Such is the nature of this punishment that it totally wipes out the nation from the face of the earth. This is because to make evil thrive and grow is against the nature of this universe and also against the wisdom of its creator. In the second situation, the people who profess faith in the messenger are substantial in number, as was in the case of Prophet (sws) Muḥammad. A conflict ensues between the righteous and the wrongdoers. Ultimately, evil is totally decimated and vanquished by the truth as is mentioned in verse 81 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl.[24]

The words "and God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness" imply that even though immunity has been lifted from the Prophet's nation and nothing can save it now, if they still seek forgiveness, God would save them. In other words, the severe warning in the first part of the verse has been slightly reduced in this second part: they still have a chance to salvage themselves. In other words, this is an invitation to the Quraysh to seek forgiveness after they had been warned. In verse 38 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, it has been similarly stated: قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّنْتَهُوْا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّعُوْدُوْا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ.[25]

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[23] And God would not have punished them when you were among them. And God would not have punished them when they ask for forgiveness.

[24] "Truth has arrived and evil has perished; indeed, evil was meant to perish."

[25] Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed.

وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ؕ اِنْ اَوْلِيَآؤُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقُوْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ اِلَّا مُكَآءً وَّتَصْدِيَةً ؕ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾[26]

The style adopted in وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ entails the following meaning: "what eminence do they have that God should not punish them?" This is actually a severe criticism on the arrogance of the Quraysh. This had its roots in their being the custodians of the House of God and observing certain rituals and offering services to the pilgrims. It has been a common misfortune of nations that they distorted God's religion through their innovations and deviants practices; however, they gave such importance to worshipping these distorted rituals that they regarded themselves to be benefactors of religion and God's chosen people. They reckoned that when they are doing all these "noble works", how can they be punished by God? It was this trial with which the Jews were inflicted and the Christians too were overcome with it. The Quraysh also became a prey to it. With great sorrow, I dare say that Satan has got the better of our own *ummah* and subjected them precisely to this trial as well.

The Quraysh thought that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and also hosted and took care of all those pilgrims who visited the House of God. They provided them with food, water and other facilities needed for their stay. What more, they reckoned, was needed to regard themselves to be the favoured and loved ones of God? It was because of this arrogance that the warnings of punishment from the Prophet (sws) weighed down heavily on them. They thought that they were the guardians of the House of God and in turn the House of God was their guardian.

The verse goes on to say that their reliance on being the custodians of the House of God has no basis when their conduct is that they stop people – who are the most worthy visitors of this House – from entering it. They are the ones who are the real adherents to the religion of Abraham (sws) and want to once again cleanse it from polytheism and make the House of God to be the centre of worship of the one true God. The reference is to Muslims who were not just being expelled from this House but also from the city in which it was situated.

The words "even though they are also not its custodians; its custodians can only be those who fear God" negate their claim of beings the custodians of the House of God. These words also indicate that these people are dishonest, they are traitors and have violated the sanctity of this House. They have not fulfilled the purpose for which this House was built. Thus they have no right to remain its custodians. They should not pin

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[26] And why should He not punish them when they stop [people] from the Sacred Mosque, even though they are also not its custodians. Its custodians can only be those who fear God. But most of them do not know this fact. And their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping. So, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of.

any false hope in God in this regard.

At this instance, it should be borne in mind what has been mentioned in verse 144 of Sūrah al-Baqarah when God promised to make Abraham (sws) the leader of a great *ummah*. Thereafter, he asked God if this status would be enjoyed by his *ummah* as well. The rejoinder of the Almighty to this was that His promise was for the righteous among it and not for its wrongdoers. The House of God was regarded as the centre of this leadership. For this reason, after this invocation by Abraham (sws) and God's elucidation, at the very time of building the House of God it was decided that its custodianship and the heirs to the leadership of Abraham's progeny would be only those who adhere to monotheism, who abide by its limits and honour its covenant. They can never be those who have dishonoured the religion of Abraham (sws) and the House of God. Here, readers may keep in mind the words of Jesus (sws) which he said at a similar instance while conversing with the Jewish scholars who claimed to be the custodians of the Bayt al-Maqdis: "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." (Matthew, 21:13)

The words "but most of them do not know this fact" refers to the general state of ignorance of the Arabs in those times. After spending a very long time in the darkness of *jāhiliyyah*, the Ishmaelites had totally forgotten their history. They did remember out of familial superiority that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). Yet beyond this, they had no knowledge as to why Abraham (sws) came to Arabia, what his message was, what were the distinctive features of the religion he taught, why he settled Ishmael (sws) in this land, why the House of God was built here and as a result of association with this House what were the responsibilities and trusts that the Ishmaelites were given. Some cultural traditions and rites of *ḥajj* that were being carried down from the times of Abraham (sws) were also altered to such an extent that it had become difficult to separate the adulteration from their actual forms. They had made the House of God their national place of worship. Its keys and the responsibility of various departments were transferred within various families. They would take pride in this and in this capacity of theirs administer the House of God. The Qur'ān has referred to this ignorance of theirs that they claimed to be the custodians of the House of God but had no knowledge of the status of God's House and of the requisites of its custodianship

The words "and their prayer before the House of God is nothing but whistling and clapping" portray an example that neither are these people worthy of being the custodians of the House of God nor do they have any knowledge of the purpose for which it was built. The purpose for this Abraham (sws) had built this house has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here, readers may take a look at the following verses of Sūrah Ibrāhīm:

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّ اجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْاَصْنَامَ رَبِّ اِنَّهُنَّ اَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ

النَّاسِ ۚ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِیْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّیْ ۚ وَمَنْ عَصَانِیْ فَاِنَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ رَبَّنَآ اِنِّیْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّیَّتِیْ بِوَادٍ غَیْرِ ذِیْ زَرْعٍ
عِنْدَ بَیْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِیُقِیْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ فَاجْعَلْ اَفْـِٕدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِیْٓ اِلَیْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
یَشْكُرُوْنَ.(١٤:٣٥-٣٧)

> And recall when Abraham prayed: “Lord! Make this land peaceful and protect me and my progeny from worshipping idols. Lord! These idols have led many people astray; so, he who follows me, is from me and he who disobeys me, then You are Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. O Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny near your sacred House in a barren valley; O Our Lord! that they show diligence in the prayer. So, incline the hearts of people towards them and grant them the sustenance of fruits so that they may be grateful to You. (14:35-37)

If one reflects at the words of this invocation, it will become evident why Abraham (sws) had settled Ishmael (sws) in Makkah, what supplication he had made for his progeny and the purpose for which the House of God was built. In particular, the words “that they show diligence in the prayer” bear testimony that just as the House of God was made the centre of worship, the real objective for which the progeny of Ishmael (sws) was settled in its whereabouts was the ritual of the prayer. However, just as the Quraysh turned the House of God into a place of idolatry, similarly, they also violated the sanctity of the prayer – the very reason for which they were made to inhabit this land.

The Qur’ān by very eloquently depicting the outward form of their prayers (clapping and whistling) has clarified that how can such jesting have anything to do with the prayer. It may be noted that to know what is part of religion and what is not, just as there are internal parameters, there are external ones as well. If a person has an insight in religion, he can judge from the outward appearance of religious innovations that such nonsensical things can have nothing to do with religion. For example, one does not need much knowledge to know that mourning rites among Shiites and irreligious practices at shrines and in the gatherings of the Sufis can have no link with religion. A person having a keen eye can easily see this. Every aspect of religion has the reflection of dignity, decency, humility and purity and the fragrance of wisdom, sagacity and spirituality in it. Everyone who has insight and whose spiritual being is alive and vibrant can very easily detect with his senses that a certain act cannot be part of religion. The phases of research and investigation come later and have separate means and sources too. Here the Qur’ān has pointed out that the external form of the prayer of these custodians of the House of God bears witness that it is an invention of Satan. It does not have the slightest reflection of the prayer for which they were made to settle in this land and because of which this House of God was given in their custody.

Uttering sounds from the mouth, whistling and playing music from an instrument all belong to the same category. These things have been part of idolatrous worship rituals since the very beginning. It is difficult to find out the concept behind them. It may be that these things were used to scare away devils and ghosts. In order to impress upon others their religious leadership, the Quraysh had cleverly placed idols worshipped by all tribes in the House of God and in its vicinity. It is obvious that when these idols came, the rites and rituals to worship them came with them. Ultimately, matters reached the extent that the prayer prescribed by Abraham (sws) was no longer offered in the House of God; so much so, people who knew about it, ceased to exist. All that remained was the foolish practice of whistling and clapping hands.

The first verse: "and why should He not punish them" began without address anyone directly. The last part of the second verse: "so, taste the flavour of punishment because of the disbelief you have been guilty of" addresses the Quraysh directly after their crimes have been enumerated. The very punishment mentioned in the first verse without addressing them is now mentioned again – this time directly addressing the Quraysh. The eloquence found in this direct address with respect to warning them is clear. In other words, they should get rid of this baseless notion that they are the custodians of the House of God and its guardians. They are only indulging in self-praise. They have, on the contrary, penned a whole history of disbelief and of dishonesty with their promise with God. Now they should taste the flavour of punishment because of these misdeeds. Found in it is a threat and also a reference to the reversal they suffered in the battle of Badr and the ones they will later suffer. The implication is that they are now under God's scourge and will continue to be its target.

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَسَيُنْفِقُوْنَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُوْنَ ؕ۬ وَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِيَمِيْزَ اللّٰهُ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَ يَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيْثَ بَعْضَهٗ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهٗ
جَمِيْعًا فَيَجْعَلَهٗ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[27]

It is explained in these verses that the great fervour the Quraysh have at this time to uproot Islam and in this frenzy they are spending their wealth in charity will not be able to stop the ultimate truth – the believers are being promised – to become evident. It may be noted that at the time of the battle of Badr, the Quraysh had generously spent on the provisions of the battle. Every chief tried to outdo the other in providing these. This magnanimity had a great effect on the weak Muslims. They were over-awed by the fact that the Quraysh had so much arms and that they also have wealth in abundance and the heart to spend it as well. They contended that how could Muslims

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27. Those who are guilty of disbelief are spending their wealth to stop [people] from the path of God. They will be spending it; then it will become a yearning for them. Then they will be vanquished and these disbelievers will be gathered and driven towards Hell so that God may separate the pure from the impure and heap the impure over the impure; then cast this heap into Hell. It is these people who shall end up as losers.

with so little battle provisions fight the might of the Quraysh.

The verses ask the believers to not be overawed by this situation. Their efforts to stop the truth from manifesting itself will not succeed. The torrent of the advancement of the truth cannot be stopped in any way. Indeed, they have spent a lot and will continue to do so. However, the result will be that they will soon end up humiliated. Defeat is destined for them in this world and in the Hereafter too, they will be driven towards Hell. The preposition اِلٰى occurs with يُحْشَرُوْنَ in this verse. This has incorporated the meaning of "driving" in the verb.

The expression: "so that God may separate the pure from the impure" is the *furqān* that will manifest itself in the Hereafter. There the Almighty will sift every evil from good and then collect the evil one on top of the other in heaps and then cast all this into Hell. The word ركم means to gather something in layers atop each other. This way is adopted when trash needs to be burnt. Such rubbish is gathered in layers and then burnt. Arranging it in layers is advantageous for the fire to burn more vigorously and everything collected becomes a source for burning one another. A subtle insinuation in this is that just as the disbelievers help one another in this world, in the same way they will be a source of burning each other by acting as firewood.

The words "it is these people who shall end up as losers" depict their worldly fate as well as the next-worldly one. In this world, they will end up earning no reward for their spending and thereby regret it, and will be totally vanquished. In the next world, they will be thrown into Hell like a heap of filth.

قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّنْتَهُوْا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّعُوْدُوْا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا
تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ كُلُّهٗ لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۭ
نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ﴿٤٠﴾[28]

Earlier, it has been indicated that this is an invitation to the Quraysh to seek forgiveness. In other words, if they want to be secure from the promised doom, they should abstain from this attitude, repent, mend their ways and accept the message of the Prophet (sws). If they do this, their past sins would be forgiven by God and they will not be punished by Him.

The words "and if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed" is a sentence of warning right after they were exhorted. In other words, if they do not desist and continue with their mischievous attitude, then they should remember that they will face God’s established practice that was faced by earlier nations who had denied their messengers. This is a reference to the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, people of Madyan and Lot (sws) etc whose accounts have been narrated in detail to the Quraysh in Sūrah al-A‘rāf.

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[28] Tell these disbelievers: If they desist, then whatever has happened in the past shall be forgiven. And if they repeat it, then the practice of God for the previous people has passed. And keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God. Thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do. And if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian. What a wonderful guardian and what a good helper.

It may be noted that a nation to whom God’s sends a messenger is conclusively delivered the truth by Him. Hence, if that nation persists in its disbelief, it is necessarily wiped out by God, whether through natural calamities or through the sword of the believers.

A messenger is the greatest, in fact, the final means of conclusive communication of the truth to its nation. For this reason, once this is done, no respite is granted to it.

In the next verse, Muslims are told to wage war against the Quraysh thus: “and keep fighting them until no persecution remains and all religion purely belongs to God.”

Two objectives of this war are mentioned. The first is persecution. Muslims were persecuted and oppressed on the basis of their religion. This war should only end when their persecution ends: no one is harassed for accepting faith, whether he is rich or poor, free or slave.

The second objective is that in the land of the House of God no other religion except Islam remains. It has been pointed out earlier that the House of God was built as a centre of the progeny of Abraham (sws) and as a place which must be faced during the prayer. This House was built for the worship of the one and only God. Only they were regarded as worthy of being its custodians who followed the religion of Abraham (sws) and who were diligent in the prayer. The Quraysh, as pointed out earlier, never fulfilled these objectives and converted it into a place of idol worship. When, in accordance with the invocation of Abraham (sws), the Almighty sent his last prophet to the Quraysh and he called people to the real Abrahamic faith, the leaders of the Quraysh who held their own interests as dear became his enemies and that of his companions and stopped them from entering this House. The fact was that it was they who really deserved to be the custodians of this House and not the Quraysh who had left the Abrahamic faith and taken to idolatry.

The Almighty directed the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims to wage war with these dishonest embezzlers and continue to do so until only Islam – the religion of Abraham (sws) – remains in Arabia. While referring to this fact, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: لا يجتمع دينان فى جزيرة العرب (two religions cannot exist together in the land of Arabia).[29]

In reality, this directive was meant for the land in which the House of God was located; however, it could only have been protected from the effects of disbelief and polytheism when the whole area of House of God is be cleansed from any interference from disbelief and polytheism. Moreover, just as Makkah has a sacred status since the time of Abraham (sws), Madīnah was also given this same status by Prophet Muḥammad (sws). This increased the sphere of this directive. This entailed that all non-Muslim elements from this area be expelled from it in which the House of God was situated. Thus the hold of the disbelievers of the Quraysh was done away with from this whole area and then gradually the Jews and the Christians too were expelled from it.

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[29] Mālik ibn Anas, *Mu’aṭṭā’*, vol. 2, 892, (no. 1584).

It is evident from this that the conflict of the Muslims with the Quraysh was not in some minor issue. Since the very beginning, only the true community of Abraham (sws) had the right to live in the land of the House of God built as its centre of worship. In order to revive this community and cleanse the House of God, the Almighty sent His last messenger to the Quraysh from within them. The purpose was to complete His final religion and so that this House, in accordance with Abraham's (sws) invocation, becomes a fountainhead of guidance and blessings for all the world. More details will be furnished on this issue in the *tafsīrs* of Sūrah al-Tawbah and Sūrah al-Ḥajj.

The words "thus, if they abstain, then God is watching whatever they do" mean that if they reform their attitude, God will not hold them accountable for their past mistakes. He will only take into account their future deeds. If they are sincere in them, they will be dealt by Him accordingly.

The words "and if they turn away, then bear in mind that God is your guardian; what a wonderful guardian and what a good helper" imply that the believers should not be scared of the large weaponry and number of their enemy. God will continue to show His splendour in future the way He has showed it now. Since He is the best of guardians, He never disappoints people who turn to him in time of difficulty, and since He is the best of helpers, those who are helped by Him are never defeated.

Section V: Verses (41-49)

Readers may recall that the *sūrah* began with a question regarding the spoils of war raised by some people. At that instance, after giving a principle answer, the discourse shifted to reform the weaknesses of a group of Muslims. These had become evident from this question and some similar issues. Now, with regard to this question, the underlying principle in the distribution of war spoils is explained and Muslims are stressed upon to accept this distribution happily and whole-heartedly. This is because whatever they have obtained is because of God's scheme and planning and whatever they will obtain in the future too will be because of His scheme and planning. They should not think that it was because of their own planning that they acquired these spoils. It was God Who did all this through them.

After that, some directives are given regarding future wars. These directives are essential to succeed in these wars and also to distinguish those who wage war to make the name of God prevail from other warriors.

Readers may study these verses in the light of this background and must continue to keep in mind that though the apparently the address in the whole of this *sūrah* is general, yet it is directed towards the group of weak Muslims.

Text and Translation

وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَ لِلرَّسُوْلِ وَ لِذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَ الْیَتٰمٰی وَ الْمَسٰكِیْنِ وَ ابْنِ السَّبِیْلِ ۙ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰی عَبْدِنَا یَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ یَوْمَ الْتَقَی الْجَمْعٰنِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ﴿۴۱﴾ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْیَا وَ
هُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰی وَ الرَّكْبُ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَ لَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِی الْمِیْعٰدِ ۙ وَ لٰكِنْ لِّیَقْضِیَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۙ۬
لِّیَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْۢ بَیِّنَةٍ وَّ یَحْیٰی مَنْ حَیَّ عَنْۢ بَیِّنَةٍ ؕ وَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِیْعٌ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۴۲﴾ اِذْ یُرِیْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِیْ مَنَامِكَ قَلِیْلًا ؕ وَ لَوْ
اَرٰىكَهُمْ كَثِیْرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَ لَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِی الْاَمْرِ وَ لٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَلَّمَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِیْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۴۳﴾ وَ اِذْ یُرِیْكُمُوْهُمْ اِذِ الْتَقَیْتُمْ فِیْۤ
اَعْیُنِكُمْ قَلِیْلًا وَّ یُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِیْۤ اَعْیُنِهِمْ لِیَقْضِیَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ؕ وَ اِلَی اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۴۴﴾ یٰۤاَیُّهَا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا لَقِیْتُمْ
فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوْا وَ اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِیْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾ وَ اَطِیْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ لَا تَنَازَعُوْا فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَ تَذْهَبَ رِیْحُكُمْ وَ اصْبِرُوْا ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِیْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ وَ لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِیْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِیَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَّ رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَ یَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا
یَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِیْطٌ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ اِذْ زَیَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّیْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَ قَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْیَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَ اِنِّیْ جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ
نَكَصَ عَلٰی عَقِبَیْهِ وَ قَالَ اِنِّیْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّنْكُمْ اِنِّیْۤ اَرٰی مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ اِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ شَدِیْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۴۸﴾ اِذْ یَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ
الَّذِیْنَ فِیْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ دِیْنُهُمْ ؕ وَ مَنْ یَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَی اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِیْزٌ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿۴۹﴾

And be informed that a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things. (41)

Recall when you were at the near end of the valley and they were at the far end and the caravan was below you. And if you had co-ordinated with one another before departing, you would certainly not have been able to meet at the time set. But God did not allow any difference to take place in order that God decide this matter which was destined to happen so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof. Indeed, God hears and knows all. Recall when God was showing them to you few in number in your dream. And had He shown them to be more to you, you would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another regarding the matter. But God saved [you]. Indeed, He knows what is in the hearts. And recall when at the time you met He was showing them to you few in number and showing you to them few in number so that He may decide the matter which was destined to happen. And all matters return to God alone. (42-44)

Believers! When you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed. And obey God and His Messenger and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken. And remain steadfast. Indeed, God is with those who are steadfast. And be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully and displaying their grandeur and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing. And recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them and said: "There is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support." So when the two groups faced one another, he took to his heels and said: "I am done with you; I am seeing what you do not. I fear God and God is stern in punishment." Recall when the hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts were saying: "Their religion has deceived them," and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise. (45-49)

Explanation

وَ اعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّمَا غَنِمۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَیۡءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَ لِلرَّسُوۡلِ وَ لِذِی الۡقُرۡبٰی وَ الۡیَتٰمٰی وَ الۡمَسٰکِیۡنِ وَ ابۡنِ السَّبِیۡلِ ۙ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ
اٰمَنۡتُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلٰی عَبۡدِنَا یَوۡمَ الۡفُرۡقَانِ یَوۡمَ الۡتَقَی الۡجَمۡعٰنِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ﴿۴۱﴾[30]

The context in which the words "and be informed" occur shows the grand as well as the certain nature of the directive stated here. It is evident from the beginning of the *sūrah* that some people had raised some very inappropriate questions about the spoils of war. A detailed comment then followed on the weakness of these people. It is in this verse that their question is actually answered. The nature of this answer is in the form of an admonition: they should listen to it very carefully and follow it without the slightest hesitation because it is from the king of the universe.

The expression غنم الشیء means فازبه وناله بلا بدل (to acquire something without exchange for anything. From this verb, the noun غنیمة has evolved. It refers to those things and resources which Muslims capture from the disbelievers in the battlefield. By referring to these captured things as نفل and غنیمة, the Qur'ān has made it evident that this is not a remuneration for the war waged. It is just a secondary benefit which a soldier receives. If he wages war for the cause of God, he only fulfils his obligation. Its reward lies with God in his eternal life in the hereafter. The spoils are just extra gains. If he acquires them, it is his good fortune and if he does not, then he should not have any greed for them.

Through this concept of spoils of war, the Qur'ān has reformed the notion the people of *jāhiliyyah* still had about them: they regarded these spoils to be the real benefit of war and would judge success in a war on its basis. Some weak Muslims too were influenced by this concept and this showed itself in the battle of Badr. Thus the Qur'ān reformed it.

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[30] And be informed that a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things.

The words "a fifth of whatever spoils of war you acquire shall belong only to God, His Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer" form the detailed answer to the question raised in the very first verse of the *sūrah*. There I have indicated that a brief answer was given: spoils do not belong to individuals, as was the tradition of the *jājiliyyah*; they have collective ownership. After that, the discourse shifted to reform the mentality of a certain group. It is now in the verse under discussion that a detailed answer is given.

It may be kept in mind that in the days of *jājiliyyah*, the chiefs took one-fourth of the plundered wealth. It was called *mirbā'*. This wealth would be used by them personally. Islam stipulated that only one-fifth of the spoils would belong to the God and His Messenger, and this too, as will become evident, were meant for the welfare of the society.

First and foremost, the share of the Almighty is stated. God obviously is above all needs and does not need anything. His share is actually reserved to make His word prevail, to safeguard it and to promote and defend it. This may take different forms and shapes depending on the circumstances in different societies and different periods of time. However, in all cases, their purpose must be the same: to make God's word prevail.

The second share stated is that of God's Messenger (sws). I am inclined to think that this is not mentioned in his individual capacity but in his capacity of head of state. Muḥammad (sws) was God's envoy and also the head of the state of Madīnah that was set up by him. It was God Who had deputed him in his former capacity and the Qur'ān has specified that God had directly taken upon Himself the responsibility of his needs in this capacity. However, as the head of state he would spend each and every moment of his life in discharging his responsibilities in this capacity. As such, it became essential that a share be given to him for his personal use. In other words, this share was the share of the head of state and after the Prophet's death, it now stands transferred to his successors who will rule after him.

The third share stated is that of the near relatives. Obviously, by these are meant those relatives who were dependent on the Prophet (sws) for their livelihood and about the fulfilment of whose needs the Prophet (sws) considered himself to be responsible. This responsibility could be ethical, religious or conventional. It is one which is morally imposed on the gracious head of every family with regard to the poor, needy and the handicapped found in it. This is evident from the vastness found in the connotation of the word ذَوِی الْقُرْبٰی (near relatives). Also apparent is that this share must continue even after the Prophet (sws) passes away otherwise it would not have been mentioned independently.

The fourth share is that of the poor, the orphans and the wayfarers. While stating this share, the particle ل (*lām*) is not repeated in this verse. This particle is appended to all the three shares stated before. This fourth category of shares is actually mentioned under the third stated share of near relatives. The reason is to honour the recipients of this category as if they are also the near relatives of the Prophet (sws). Those who are aware of Islam's temperament know that the status of the orphans and the needy is of the family of the head of state. Just as a head of state has concerns for his family, he also has the same, in fact, even more concern for the welfare of the needy and the wayfarers. The caliph ‘Umar (rta) is reported to have said that his share in the wealth of the state is only as much as that of a guardian in the wealth of the orphans he is in charge of. He also has repeatedly said that the responsibility of all the needy and wayfarers of the state directly lies on him. It may be kept in mind that a society in which the orphans are disregarded, the needy sleep empty stomach and the wayfarers are not looked after can have no link with Islam whatever claim it may make.

Here it may also be kept in mind that there are people who regard the particle ل (*lām*) to be that of *tamlīk* (personal possession) and as a result do not allow this money to be spent on collective projects set up for the welfare of the poor, needy and the orphans. However, this opinion does not carry much weight as regards linguistics. In Arabic, the particle ل (*lām*) has many meanings including that of *tamlīk*. One of these meanings is to provide benefit. In my opinion, an Islamic government is fully authorized to spend on the collective welfare of the needy under this share. Giving money to them on an individual basis is not essential in all cases.

Consider next, the part اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ. The expression يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ (day of *furqān*) refers to the day in which the battle of Badr was fought. The words يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ (the day in which the two groups met) explain this expression. This is because it was that day which was the first one in which the believers and disbelievers engaged in a battle. It has already been explained why the Battle of Badr is called يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ (day of *furqān*). The leaders of the Quraysh themselves had regarded this battle to be a barometer of success. They contended that the one who lost this battle would be considered to be deviant and the one who won this battle would be considered to be the adherent to the truth. Moreover, also evident from this battle was the manifestation of God's help in multifarious ways to such an extent that everyone could clearly discern on whose side God was. It is to this help that the words "what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict" point.

The words "if you believe in God and in that what We sent down to Our servant on the day of verdict when both groups met, and God has power over all things" reinforce what is said in the earlier part of the verse. The implication is that they should follow the directive of distributing the spoils without any hesitancy if they believe in God and in His help that was sent down on the day when a decisive battle was fought between truth and falsehood. Since these words are directed at the people who had raised objections on this distribution, it was said "if you believe in God." It is evident from such questions that faith had not fully found its roots in their hearts. Also noteworthy is the fact that the words used are not: "if you believe in the help that We sent down to you." On the contrary, they are: "that We sent down to Our servant." It is evident from them that no group should think that this success was because of its own doing. Whatever happened was God's work and the blessing of His messenger for whose help God sent His army. God has power over everything. Neither God nor His messenger is dependent on anyone. Whenever God wants, He will send His army to help His messenger.

إِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى وَ الرَّكْبُ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيْعٰدِ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۙ۬ لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَّيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾[31]

This verse depicts an example of God's planning that was referred to in the previous verse.

It has been stated earlier that the Almighty had shown the image of the arrival of the caravan and the army of the Quraysh to the Prophet (sws) in a dream. In accordance with this guidance provided, he had marched out from Madīnah and reached the valley of Badr right at the time when on the opposite side the army of the Quraysh arrived faking protection of the caravan. It is no ordinary a thing for an army to arrive at the right place at the right time to fight the enemy. Success in the battle mostly depends on this. Even a slight delay, at times can result in defeat. Similarly, reaching the place well before time is also fraught with danger and can produce negative results. If not any other thing, the issue of supplies for the Muslims was a big issue especially when in those times they were almost unarmed and also very poor. In such situations, the warring armies also make strategies aimed at deceiving one another. The planning behind the declaration of war and giving ultimatum to the enemy might not be what seems on the surface. At times, the target is something else while the indication given is towards another thing. God protected the Muslims from all such connivances and through His special guidance made them reach the place they should have arrived to face the army. This was not a coincidence: it was God's planning. If the warring armies had declared war and sounded a prior ultimatum, it would not have been easy to meet each other in the battlefield at the right time.

In the expression لِّيَقْضِيَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا, a verb is suppressed before لِّيَقْضِيَ. What is

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31. Recall when you were at the near end of the valley and they were at the far end and the caravan was below you. And if you had co-ordinated with one another before departing, you would certainly not have been able to meet at the time set. But God did not allow any difference to take place in order that God decide this matter which was destined to happen so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof. Indeed, God hears and knows all.

implied is that God through His special planning made the believers face their enemy so that that happens what had to happened and destined.

The words “so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof; indeed, God hears and knows all” explain the scheme of God and its benefits. Death and life are referred to here in the spiritual sense.

Consider the words: لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ.The letter عَنْ in Arabic is also a means of delineating the source and origin of something. The battle of Badr had become such a decisive event between the believers and the disbelievers that neither were the latter left with any excuse nor were the former left with any ambiguity. The disbelief of the disbelievers had become fully evident to them and the belief of the believers shone before them as the midday sun.

The attributes mentioned at the end of the verse relate to the whole scheme stated earlier. In other words, huge was the improbability of both armies facing one another and that too at the right time and so was the issue of the caravan; however, God knew their secret planning and their whisperings of the heart. He made each of them reach the right place to produce the result He intended to produce because He hears and knows all.

إِذْ يُرِيكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَنَامِكَ قَلِيْلًا ۚ وَلَوْ اَرٰىكَهُمْ كَثِيْرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَلَّمَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٤٣﴾[32]

Stated in this verse is the second example of God’s planning. The Prophet (sws) not only told the believers that the number of the enemy was not large, but also gave them glad tidings this small faction will be vanquished by them. God did this because if He had shown the enemy to be large in number which they actually were, the Prophet (sws) would necessarily have informed the believers of this and this would have adversely affected weak Muslims. They would have lost the courage to fight and would have differed with one another whether they should fight or not. Since God is fully aware of the weaknesses of the hearts, He chalked out this scheme so that the morale of the Muslims remains intact and they remain strong.

From this verse, some people have derived the result that sometimes prophets of God are also shown something in their dreams which is actually against the reality. Thus the Quraysh army was very large in number but they were shown in small number to the Prophet (sws). However, this inference is not correct in my opinion. Dreams are among a means of revelation and hence the dream of a prophet can never be against reality. It may be kept in mind that at times a reality is shown in a symbolic way and not in its actual form. Same is the case here. Though the army of the disbelievers was large in number, it was not that much viz a viz its moral and actual standing. It was this actual and moral scarcity in their number that was shown in the dream. It is this aspect of a dream because of which it is essential to interpret it. At times, even a prophet, momentarily, is not fully clear about it. However, it is not true that the dream of a prophet is against reality.

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[32] Recall when God was showing them to you few in number in your dream. And had He shown them to be more to you, you would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another regarding the matter. But God saved [you]. Indeed, He knows what is in the hearts.

Here also needs to be understood that the Qur'ān has used the word قليل in a very apt way. This is because this word does not only mean something which is less in number; it also means something which is less in the metaphorical and symbolic sense. Thus, for example, Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān says:[33]

فإن أك فی شرارکم قلیلا
فإنی فی خیارکم کثیر

(If I am in small in status in your eyes O miscreants, there is nothing for me to worry; I have a big status in the eyes of your decent elements)

The words "would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another" are addressed in general sense. However, this does not mean that it relates to all Muslims. Thus in the conventional style of the Qur'ān, general words are used to refer to the character of a specific group among them which has been under discussion since the beginning of the *sūrah*. In verse 7, it is stated that this group in spite of knowing that the Prophet (sws) was going out to fight the army of the Quraysh, tried to convince him to take on the caravan. Moreover, in spite of the glad tidings given to it by the Prophet (sws) that those who will fight with them will be defeated, it was still scared to death. This verse is actually directed to this group. With this morale, if they had been told that they were to fight an army and that too a large one, they would have totally been overcome with a defeatist mentality. It is for this reason that the Almighty showed the number of the enemy to be small in the symbolic sense.

It may also be noted that at all instances: "showing them to you", "your dream" and "shown them to be more to you", the Prophet (sws) is addressed because the dream was only shown to him. A messenger of God is like the eye of the believers. Hence, it is he who sees but whatever he sees is related to all of them. For this reason, these words were addressed to the Prophet (sws) but when their response was stated in the verse, all the believers were included.

وَ اِذۡ يُرِيۡكُمُوۡهُمۡ اِذِ الۡتَقَيۡتُمۡ فِيۡۤ اَعۡيُنِكُمۡ قَلِيۡلًا وَّ يُقَلِّلُكُمۡ فِيۡۤ اَعۡيُنِهِمۡ لِيَقۡضِيَ اللّٰهُ اَمۡرًا كَانَ مَفۡعُوۡلًا ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرۡجَعُ

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[33] Abū al-Faraj al-Aṣbahānī, *Al-'Iqd al-farīd*, vol. 13, 287.

الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿٤٤﴾[34]

This verse mentions another instance of help for the believers. The numbers were shown less to one another in the earlier stage so that both armies should not become scared of fighting and a decisive conflict between truth and evil ensue – something which had been destined to happen in the scheme of God.

The disbelievers only saw the actual small number of the army of the believers. They could not gauge its moral might which had practically transformed it into something formidable. However, in the later stages, they saw this small number in the form of a raging storm because at that time the moral might of the Muslims army fully manifested itself.

The believers saw the mighty army of the Quraysh to be less in number because the Almighty unveiled to them its moral status. One's sight is subservient to one's heart to a large extent. If the heart is strong and replete with resolve and conviction and has faith deeply rooted in it, even a mountain appears like a grain to it. Similarly, if it is focused on its objective and willing to go to the ultimate limit to achieve it, no hurdle can be an impediment before it. However, if the heart is devoid of these things as harmless an animal as the rabbit appears to be a lion to it. There is none stronger than a human being and none weaker. The source of this strength and weakness is not his external surroundings but rather his own inner self. In this era of materialism, it is not easy to make people understand that there was a time when a single believer had the same might as one thousand disbelievers. However, this is the bare truth and history bears evidence to it. Even today every person can experience it if he has tasted the flavour of faith.

The last part of the verse: "and all matters return to God alone" that everything happens from God. Matters like the number of some group being shown less than its actual count or vice versa, granting victory or inflicting defeat – all comes from God. The duty of an individual is to fulfil his obligations and leave the rest to God. He should never remain under the misconception that he can do whatever he wants to regardless of God's role.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوْا وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوْا فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيْحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[35]

These verses give direction to the believers for future stages. Steadfastness is essential because God’s help always appears in the garb of available means and resources. This world is a place of test for people. It is only when they do their due that the help of God comes to their rescue. People do not have the right to test God like the Israelites by staying put and asking God to grant them victory.

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[34] And recall when at the time you met He was showing them to you few in number and showing you to them few in number so that He may decide the matter which was destined to happen. And all matters return to God alone.

[35] Believers! When you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed. And obey God and His Messenger and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken. And remain steadfast. Indeed, God is with those who are steadfast.

Remembrance of God is a means to remain steadfast. It has been mentioned earlier that real strength is obtained from the heart and strength of heart is acquired through faith. Here it is said that faith remains lush and evergreen through God’s remembrance. This remembrance is as essential as air is essential for life. This is because a person is always in conflicto with Satan. However, in testing circumstances, this remembrance is needed more. For this reason, it is stated that the believers should remember God in abundance.

“Success” is a comprehensive Word. This comprises success both in this world and in the next. Mere dominance can be achieved without God’s remembrance, but it cannot be a means of success. Success can only be acquired through that dominance whose door is opened with the help of God’s remembrance and in which those who attain this dominance live in God’s company. It should be kept in mind that the real factor which keeps an army steadfast it its morale. This fact has always been acknowledged in the past just as it is in the present era. Islam has said that it is God’s remembrance that boosts the morale of an army waging war for His cause. The truth is that it is this remembrance which is the fountainhead of resolve in a believer.

Obeying God and His Messenger which this verse mentions has a special connotation as well besides its general one: believers must display immaculate discipline against the enemy; they must obey the directives of God and also those of His Messenger without any hesitancy. Just as a heart devoid of God’s remembrance loses focus, similarly if a group of people is slack in carrying out orders, its discipline is compromised and cowardice gets the better of it.

The words “and do not differ with one another so that you feel defeated and your resolve may weaken” state in the negative sense was stated above in positive sense. It is this directive which was not followed by a group of believers in the battle of Uḥud and its adverse consequence was borne by the whole army. In verse 152 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is stated:(حَتّٰۤی اِذَا فَشِلۡتُمۡ وَ تَنَازَعۡتُمۡ فِی الۡاَمۡرِ وَ عَصَیۡتُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَاۤ اَرٰىکُمۡ مَّا تُحِبُّوۡنَ until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed [the Messenger] after God had made you see what you desired).

The word وَاصۡبِرُوۡا is used synonymously with فَاثۡبُتُوۡا. Both means to be steadfast in the imperative sense. However, the latter word was said with respect to individuals and the former is said with respect to the whole group. The implication is that if the believers want to earn God’s help, they should prove themselves worthy of it through their collective conduct. God does not help a scattered and an indisciplined lot. He only helps those who fight for his cause in a united and an organized way.

وَ لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَّ رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَ
اِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَ قَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَ اِنِّيْ جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى
عَقِبَيْهِ وَ قَالَ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٤٨﴾[36]

The word بَطَر means to show haughtiness before the truth and to turn away from it in arrogance. The Qur'ān calls it rebelliousness with which a person or a group is overcome with after receiving God's favours. Instead of showing gratitude they become arrogant and rebellious. In verse 58 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is stated: وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍۭ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا.[37]

In these verses, the Qur'ān has stopped the believers to go against what they were asked to do earlier: remembering God in abundance. The words "like those who" refer to the Quraysh. As pointed out earlier, they had come out to the fight the battle of Badr in a very pompous and pretentious way. Their arrogance was due to their large number and copious means and resources. Believers are told not to adopt this attitude. Instead, they should be humble because they are exemplars of God's obedience and worship – which are based on humility. The purpose is to tell the believers that the war they wage is actually worship in essence and hence its majesty must always be maintained. The manner in which this instruction is given is to prepare them to be on guard about the future. Such circumstances will ensue in which they might succumb to trials if they are not on guard. In other words, glad tidings and warnings – both are found in these verses. They must always remain attached to God and never become arrogant if their number and resources increase. These resources are not the real thing; God's company and help are the real thing which believers should rely upon.

Here it should be kept in mind that just as one group in the battle of Uḥud had been inflicted with dispute, as mentioned earlier and had thereby placed the whole army in harm's way, in a similar way, on the occasion of the battle of Ḥunayn the believers faced a great trial because of showing conceit on their large number. Thus in verse 25 of Sūrah Tawbah, it is stated: وَّ يَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَّ ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ.[38]

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[36] And be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully and displaying their grandeur and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing. And recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them and said: "There is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support." So when the two groups faced one another, he took to his heels and said: "I am done with you; I am seeing what you do not. I fear God and God is stern in punishment."

[37] And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed.

[38] And on the day of Ḥunayn also when you were overcome with pride on your large number. Then that large number was of no use to you and the earth despite its vastness became

The word “boastfully” refers to the pretentiousness with which each and every leader of the Quraysh in the battle of Badr was overcome with. The opposite of this word is “sincerity.” In other words, believers are being told that whatever they undertake must be solely to please God and to earn reward in the Hereafter and not to earn any worldly praise.

The first part of the clause in “and those who stop [people] from the way of God even though God fully encompasses what they are doing” point to the reason of their pomposity. The second part shows that these foolish people do not know that however much human beings may expand the circle of their achievements they are always in the control of God. Their feats are with His confines.

The words “and recall when Satan made their deeds appear fair to them” imply that not only was the pomposity of the Quraysh based on their abundant resources and large number, it was Satan’s false promises of help too that lured them away. He continued to motivate and urge them to fight. However, as soon as the two forces met in battle, he turned and ran away.

Satan is found both among humankind and jinnkind. However, here I am inclined to believe that the reference here is to the Jews. It is evident from books of history and the Qur’ān too that the Jews feared the message of the Prophet (sws). While he was still in Makkah, they tried to instigate the Quraysh against him in various ways. Once he migrated to Madīnah and received the support of the Anṣār, they specially became very apprehensive. Besides these fears about the future, they were also scared on the basis of the prophecies found in their scriptures that Muḥammad (sws) may well be the predicted messenger. They were not ready at any cost to accept a messenger from outside their lineage. However, because of their cowardice, they did not have the courage to directly launch any offensive against him. Yet, they would secretly instigate the Quraysh and also try to conspire and connive with the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. In these circumstances, it is quite possible that they too suggested the Quraysh to attack Madīnah in the garb of protecting the trade caravan. They must have enticed the Quraysh to fight the believers by reminding them that their large number was enough to defeat a handful of Muslims and in the second place, if needed, they too would help them. It may be noted that the Jews had also made a treaty with the Muslims, but as will be evident from verses 56-57 ahead that they never abided by it. In fact, they continued with their mischievous ways. However, because of their cowardice, they never came out openly to express their spite. They lured the Quraysh into the battle but when the two armies faced one another and they saw the morale of the Muslims, they became dumbfounded. At this instance, their dormant fear about the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) must have become active too. Their scriptures too foretold the arrival of a prophet that he would arrive in the company of angels.

It may also be kept in mind, as referred to in the tafsīr of Sūrah al-Baqarah that the

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narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away.

battle of Badr with regard to its battle-layout, number of fighters and objective of the battle was similar to the one fought by the Israelites under Saul in the times of the Samuel (sws) against Goliath.

The parable cited here by the Qur'ān about the Jews is also used by it for the hypocrites belonging to Jews and had infiltrated among the believers to connive against them. They would comfort the Jews that if the believers attack them, they will side by them and not the believers. However, the Qur'ān has clarified that this is precisely the same deception as the one Satan inflicts on those who trust him. Since both these parables are very similar, I am going to cite them here so that what is under discussion becomes very clear.

In Sūrah Ḥashr, this is how the character of one group of hypocrites belonging to the Jews is depicted:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَئِنْ اُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا
نُطِيْعُ فِيْكُمْ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا ۙ وَّاِنْ قُوْتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ لَئِنْ اُخْرِجُوْا لَا يَخْرُجُوْنَ مَعَهُمْ ۚ
وَلَئِنْ قُوْتِلُوْا لَا يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ ۚ وَلَئِنْ نَّصَرُوْهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْاَدْبَارَ ۫ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ. (٥٩: ١١-١٢)

Have you not seen the hypocrites? They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are driven out, then we shall, at all cost, go out with you, and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you." God bears witness that they are absolute liars. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them and, if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch. (59:11-12)

Later in the same sūrah, these hypocrites are portrayed in a parable in the following words:

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِذْ قَالَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَآ
اَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيْنَ. (٥٩: ١٦-١٧)

And the example of the hypocrites is that of Satan who directs man: "Commit disbelief." Then when he commits disbelief, he says: "I disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe." Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded. (59:16-17)

Just as in these verses the hypocrites among the Jews are likened to Satan, in the verses under discussion too, though Satan is mentioned, but the Jews are insinuated. Instead of using a parable, insinuation has been employed here because all these pranks of the Jews were clandestine. So the Qur’ān did not want to expose them at that time. However, the way they are mentioned also subtly exposes them a bit too so that they know that God is fully aware of their misdeeds. At the same time, the believers too are fore-warned of their hidden enemy. Here specially, if sentences like “there is no one among people today who can dominate you, and I am your support” and “I am seeing what you do not” besides some others are deliberated upon, the actual reality will come to light.

The behaviour of Satan depicted here is a reflection of his inner-self and attitude. He does not say his words of support and disavowal through his tongue. Likewise, the similar behaviour of the Jews depicted is a reflection of their mental state and of their attitude. It is not that they said these words to the Quraysh. The word “said” in the Qur’ān has been mentioned at various places to depict what is said in the heart. The Jews had been blinded by their jealousy and wanted the Quraysh to wipe out the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, deep in their hearts they also knew that since they were facing a messenger of God and attacking him was like attacking a mountain and annihilating their own selves, they did not want to come out in the open with their enmity. They wanted others to bear this threat.

Also evident from this discussion is the character of Satan: he entices people to sin and offers them his support but when the time comes, he turns on his heels, lest he too may be taken to task. The Qur’ān has made it clear that those who adopt this attitude of Satan will be thrown into Hell. They are like hidden snakes which silently guide people to wrongs and do not take part in them for fear of God. They will suffer a painful punishment. The example of such people is that of a person who trains and instructs others in robbery and theft but never commits these crimes himself with his accomplices lest the police may catch him. It is obvious that such accomplices to crime are also culpable and will be seized for it. In fact, they reach the same fate as their followers if not more. It is to this fact the Qur’ān has referred to in these words of Sūrah al-Ḥashr cited earlier: “Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded.”

It is evident from this that the Jews too were afflicted with this Satanic attitude. They wanted that the believers should be destroyed. They even instigated the Quraysh to war against the believers but never participated in it themselves. The reason was that they also feared the divine police of God referred to them by the words “I am seeing what you do not.”

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ دِيْنُهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾[39]

When the word “ailment” is used with “hypocrisy”, it means “jealousy.” After the conspiracies of Jews, the mischief worked by the hypocrites and jealous elements is now referred to.

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[39] Recall when the hypocrites and those who have an ailment in their hearts were saying: “Their religion has deceived them,” and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise.

The deception of religion referred to here is that the disbelievers contended that the believers think that in spite of their small number, they could take on the huge army of their enemy: their religion has made them lose their senses. When such sentences are uttered in particular by people belonging to their own faction, the believers were bound to be influenced by them. In particular, when they had very little resources, they could have lost their morale. However, God protected them from its evil effects.

The words "and those who trust God, then God is Powerful, very Wise" refer to the fact that in spite of the opposition of these hypocrites and other jealous elements, those who trusted God and proceeded for the onslaught saw from their own eyes that God is Powerful and Wise. He is with those who trust Him and no power can defeat Him. It is He Who chalks out the strategy for them and none can defeat His strategy.

Section V: Verses (50-58)

The succeeding verses say that the defeat the Quraysh have faced is just the first instalment of warning. The real punishment they will face is yet to come very soon when they face death. God's established practice is that He does not deprive a nation of His favours until it adopts a wrong attitude. When it does so, it is first warned by God. When it does not pay heed to this warning and continues to increase in its rebelliousness, it is visited by a decisive punishment from God. How the Pharaoh and his people were dealt by Him is an example of this. They were first warned through various trials to make them realize their folly. When this did not happen, they were drowned by Him.

After that, it is stated that the filthiest people are those have become adamant on disbelief and did not profess belief. They repeatedly break their promises. If these people face the Prophet (sws) and his companions in some battle, they should rout them to such an extent that those who are supporting them also learn a lesson and those about whom the fear any breach of promise, they should throw it back on them because God does not like those who break promises.

Readers may now study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُوْنَ وُجُوْهَهُمْ وَاَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ
اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿٥١﴾ كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا

بِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ كَدَاۡبِ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَهۡلَكۡنٰهُمۡ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ وَ
اَغۡرَقۡنَاۤ اٰلَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوۡا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَهُمۡ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ اَلَّذِيۡنَ عٰهَدۡتَّ
مِنۡهُمۡ ثُمَّ يَنۡقُضُوۡنَ عَهۡدَهُمۡ فِىۡ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَّهُمۡ لَا يَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاِمَّا تَثۡقَفَنَّهُمۡ فِى الۡحَرۡبِ فَشَرِّدۡ بِهِمۡ مَّنۡ خَلۡفَهُمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ
يَذَّكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَاِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنۡ قَوۡمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانۢبِذۡ اِلَيۡهِمۡ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الۡخَآئِنِيۡنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And if you would have been able to see when the angels claim the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and while saying: “Taste now the torment of burning!” This is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants. (50-51)

The same thing happened to them as had happened to the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the revelations of God; so, God seized them for their sins. Indeed, God is mighty; He is stern in retribution. This happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself. And God indeed hears and knows all. They face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the signs of their Lord; so, at last, We destroyed them because of their sins and drowned the Pharaoh’s people. And all these were unjust. (52-54)

Indeed, in the sight of God, the vilest animals are the people who denied and are not in any way prepared to believe. With whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear. So, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson. And if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back their promise to them on equal terms. And God does not like the treacherous. (55-58)

Explanation

وَلَوۡ تَرٰٓى اِذۡ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا ۙ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضۡرِبُوۡنَ وُجُوۡهَهُمۡ وَاَدۡبَارَهُمۡ ۚ وَذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ الۡحَرِيۡقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتۡ
اَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيۡسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِيۡدِ ﴿٥١﴾[40]

The answer to the conditional clause “and if you would have been able to see …” is suppressed. This suppression is in deference to eloquence. In other words, the heinous nature of the believers are being told to see is beyond words.

The expression لَيۡسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِيۡدِ reflects a special linguistic style: the negation on the exaggerated statement is meant to exaggerate the negation. It means: God is not the slightest bit unjust to His servant. Thus Imru’ al-Qays uses expressions like لَيُسَ بفَعَّالِ[41] and لَيُسَ بقَتَّالِ[42] meaning “such and such a person has no not the slightest ability to do anything” and “such an such a person has not the slightest ability to fight a battle” respectively.

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[40] And if you would have been able to see when the angels claim the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and while saying: “Taste now the torment of burning!” This is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants.

The implication is that the real beating the disbelievers were inflicted with in the battle of Badr was from the angels when they claimed their souls. Had the believers been able to see this thrashing, they would have got to know how utterly routed the disbelievers were. After that is the phase of the punishment of Hell that cannot be even be imagined in this world.

The words “this is the punishment of your own misdeeds and God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants” imply that they will only reap what they sowed.

كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿۵۲﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۳﴾ۙ كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ
فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَاَغْرَقْنَاۤ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۴﴾[43]

The word اٰل not only refers to one’s children but also to one’s followers and nation.

The fate of the Pharaoh’s nation and those before them was because of their ingratitude, denying God’s revelations and not duly valuing His signs.

Concomitant indications show that the punishment referred to in the words “so, God seized them for their sins” is the one God inflicts on nations to warn them. Once a messenger is sent to a nation, such warnings specially manifest themselves. Readers can look up verses 115 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, 42 of Sūrah al-An‘ām and 94 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf to understand this established practice of God. The implication is that this reversal suffered by the Quraysh in the battle of Badr was meant to shake and jolt them and was in accordance with God’s established practice. Examples of earlier nations can be seen in history. Now it remains to be seen whether the Quraysh benefit from these warnings or by following in the footsteps of most of their predecessors persist in denying their messenger and God's revelations. If they become adamant on their denial, God will destroy them the way he destroyed the Pharaoh's nation and others.

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[41] Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Muqrī al-Tilmasānī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Undulus al-raṭīb*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388 AH), 519.

[42] Abū al-Qāsin Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-Balāghah* (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, 1399 AH), 452.

[43] The same thing happened to them as had happened to the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the revelations of God; so, God seized them for their sins. Indeed, God is mighty; He is stern in retribution. This happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself. And God indeed hears and knows all. They face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh and those before them. They rejected the signs of their Lord; so, at last, We destroyed them because of their sins and drowned the Pharaoh’s people. And all these were unjust.

In these verses, the words كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ occur twice. This is not a repetition; in fact, two different things are stated at both places. First it is said that this is the same warning that was meted out to the Pharaoh and other nations. It is then stated that if they do not benefit from this warning, they too will ultimately be afflicted with the same decisive torment that these nations were afflicted with.

The words "this happened because God does not change a favour He has blessed a nation with unless it changes what is related to itself" state the wisdom behind God warning nations. When God does a favour to a nation, it is not without reason. It is because it professes certain attributes and traits. Similarly, when it deprives a nation of His favour, it is not without a cause. It is because He sees that a nation has lost the very attributes and traits that made it worthy of this favour. It is this deviance on its part that entailed that it be warned and delivered the truth in a conclusive manner. If this warning wakes it, it will continue to enjoy this favour; otherwise, it will be stripped off it after conclusive communication to the truth. It itself is responsible for this state of affairs. God is not unjust to it.

In other words, the Quraysh are admonished that they still have a chance and they can avail it. God does not want to forcibly snatch away the favour He did to them; it is because of their own wayward beliefs and deeds that are its cause.

The words "and God indeed hears and knows all" imply that there is a certain law which God follows. It is based on His hearing and knowledge. After granting authority, means and resources to nations, He continues to observe what they do on the basis of these attributes.

The words "they face the same as happened with the people of the Pharaoh" depict the fate the Quraysh will meet in the future if they do not learn a lesson from the warnings meted out to them. They will face God's decisive punishment. The difference of words and tone found in both these verses may be noted. The first verse said كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ and the second one says كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ. The previous one had the words فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ and this one has فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ وَ اَغْرَقْنَاۤ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ. Without making this distinction between the two, the occasion and context of both will become clear.

اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِيْ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَّ
هُمْ لَا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾ فَاِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَ اِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً
فَانْۢبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[44]

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[44] Indeed, in the sight of God, the vilest animals are the people who denied and are not in

This is a reference to the Jews and other tribes with whom the Prophet (sws) made agreements after his migration. They include the tribes of Juhaynah, Ḍamrah and the Banū Mudlij among others. The Prophet (sws) continued to abide by these agreements but the Jews did not honour them even for one day and these tribe too openly or secretly violated them because of provocation from the Jews or pressure from the Quraysh.

The emphasis and intensity found in the words اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ has already been explained in verse 22 earlier. It negates the very reason for their existence. In other words, a group of people has value and importance as long as it has the ability to think and understand. Those who do not have this ability neither professed faith earlier nor will do so in future. They now are only a heap of filth and the world of God will not benefit from their existence anymore. Here it may be kept in mind that a messenger is the final means of conclusive communication of the truth. Those who do not open their eyes even after him have no cure for their blindness and there is no purpose left to let them remain on earth. If God gives people the opportunity to live, it is not merely to give them life for the sake of it; the purpose is that they think, understand and mend their affairs.

The words "with whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear" refer to the people mentioned earlier who never abided by their promise. Whenever a testing situation would arise, they would try to harm the believers. Their sympathies continued to be with the Quraysh. Repeated breach of agreement bears witness to their heard-heartedness, shallow character and a lack of sense of honour.

The words "at every instance" show that for the purpose for which this treaty was made, if a similar trial would befall, they would never abide by it. The expression "and have no fear" means that they would not stay away from the breaking the treaty and from its consequences. The fact is that abiding by promises is a universally accepted norm and also a matter of accountability before God.

The words "so, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson" imply that at the moment whatever nuisance they are creating is behind a veil and none of them has the courage to come into the open. However, if believers meet them in a battle, then such should be the extent of their strike that not only the combatants are routed but others who are planning something similar too are utterly discouraged

Consider next, the part: "and if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back

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any way prepared to believe. With whom you elicited a promise, then they break their promise at every instance and have no fear. So, if you find them in a battle, strike them in such a way that you also rout those behind them so that they may learn a lesson. And if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back their promise to them on equal terms. And God does not like the treacherous.

their promise to them on equal terms.” It is a general guidance for all similar treaties. Their responsibility is not a one sided process. It is the responsibility rests on both parties. The expression عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ means that Muslims also have the right to retaliate on equal footing. It is evident from it that the revenge should never exceed the harm inflicted: it should be commensurate with it. Some people have derived from this expression that it is essential to inform the opposite party about the termination of a treaty. I could find no argument for this deduction in it. However, what is evident is that a mere hypothetical fear is not enough to end a treaty. The other party must have practically breached it. In the first place the verb تَخَافَنَّ has emphasis in it. Secondly, the condition عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ also points to this.

The last part of verse 58: “and God does not like the treacherous” is a statement of acquittal. In other words, God has no relation with such treacherous people. So when God has no relation with them, how can the believers maintain relations with them? Also indicated in this is that if the believers want to maintain these relations with them they should remember that they are being cordial with those hated by God.

Section VI: Verses (59-66)

In the succeeding verses, believers are urged to remain prepared for war and make available for themselves the military might for this. The reason was that after being defeated in the battle of Badr, the Quraysh were writhing with anger. At the same time, the Jews too were fervently making new plans to inflict defeat upon the believers. Earlier, they had pinned their hopes on the Quraysh to rout the believers but this plan had miserable failed. In view of these circumstances, the believers were directed to fully prepare themselves for war.

In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is assured that if the enemy shows any compromising attitude, he too can make peace with them. However, if in the guise of this compromise, they play a trick, then he should remember the God Who granted victory through His help to a handful of believers is with him.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should be scared owing to the small number of believers. For him, God and these few believers are sufficient. He should console the believers by telling them that ten of them will be enough for a hundred disbelievers. Real strength is the strength of the heart and not number of combatants. The enemy have hollow hearts.

It is evident from concomitant indications that verse 66, the last verse of this section, was revealed when the believers had become large in number. This reduced the responsibility on them which the previous verse had spelled out. Since verse 66 had the same topic, it was placed right after it. It will be explained later.

Text and Translation

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَبَقُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾ وَاَعِدُّوْا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ قُوَّةٍ وَّمِنْ رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُوْنَ بِهٖ
عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَهُمْ ۚ اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يُوَفَّ اِلَيْكُمْ وَ
اَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ وَاِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۶۱﴾ وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْۤا اَنْ يَّخْدَعُوْكَ
فَاِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّٰهُ ؕ هُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ وَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ لَوْ اَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مَّاۤ اَلَّفْتَ
بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۶۳﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۶۴﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا
النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ عِشْرُوْنَ صٰبِرُوْنَ يَغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْۤا اَلْفًا
مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۶۵﴾ اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ؕ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ
يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْۤا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۶۶﴾

And these disbelievers must not remain under the misconception that they will escape. They can never go beyond Our grasp. And as much as you can, prepare against them an army and trained horses so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours and others beside them too who you do not know. God knows them. And whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you. And you shall not be given any less. (59-60)

And if they people tilt towards peace, you also tilt to it and trust God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. And if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you. It is He who aided you through His help and through the believers and joined their hearts with one another. And had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts; but God joined them. Indeed, He is Mighty and Wise. (61-63)

O Prophet! Sufficient is God for you and sufficient are these believers who have chosen to follow you. O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war. If there are twenty among you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred; and if a hundred, they shall subdue a thousand of the disbelievers. This is because these are a people without insight. (64-65)

Now God has lessened your responsibility and He knew that some weakness has come into you: So, if there are a hundred of you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they shall subdue two thousand with the directive of God. And God is with those who remain steadfast. (66)

Explanation

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَبَقُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾[45]

In the previous verses, the disbelievers were warned and it was specially pointed out to them that God embraces all their conspiracies and mischief. The verse under discussion further emphasizes this point: God has now started to go after them and they should not think that they will run away from Him.

The phrase أعجزه الصيد means "the prey could not be caught; he escaped grasp."

وَاَعِدُّوْا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ قُوَّةٍ وَّمِنْ رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُوْنَ بِهٖ عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَهُمْ ۚ اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَیْءٍ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يُوَفَّ اِلَيْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾[46]

The power قُوَّة is also used in the Qur'ān to refer to the number of people and manpower. This is evident from verse 69 of Sūrah Tawbah, verse 80 of Sūrah Hūd, verse 65 of Sūrah al-Kahf, verse 15 of Sūrah al-Fuṣṣīlat.

The expression رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ refers to horses which are specially trained for war and are dedicated and preserved for this purpose. Not all types of horses can be used in battles. In the battles of those times, horses occupied the real importance. The Arabs would specially train them for this objective keeping in view their climate. Precisely the same directive is given here to the believers: besides organizing individuals for this purpose, they should train and prepare horses. Until then, whenever the chances of a battle would arise, in accordance with the general Arab custom, every soldier would come out with whatever resources he had. However, in this verse, believers are told that they should increase their military might both in weapons and in number of combatants. Horses had the same significance in those times in battles as tanks and planes have in current times. In the battle of Badr, believers had very few horses with them. Hence they were directed to increase their number for future campaigns.

The words "so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours" state the objective of the whole exercise. This will deter the enemy and they will dare not think of attacking the believers. Here all enemies of the believers are regarded as the enemies of God because it was for His cause they fought whomsoever they needed to fight. There was no other motive in it.

The words "and others beside them too who you do not know; God knows them" imply that there were two categories of enemies of God and of the believers. The first category was of those who had come out in the open like the Quraysh. They had been their enemies since the very first day. The second category was of those who were hidden like the Jews. Their clandestine connivances and conspiracies have been mentioned earlier. Also included in this category were those tribes who had struck a treaty of non-alignment with the Prophet (sws) but too were thinking of breaching it at the provocation of the Quraysh and the Jews. Moreover, the hypocrites too were fully supporting and carrying out the plans of the enemies. In Sūrah Tawbah, the Qur'ān has referred to them thus:

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[45] And these disbelievers must not remain under the misconception that they will escape. They can never go beyond Our grasp.

[46] And as much as you can, prepare against them an army and trained horses so that you strike awe into the enemies of God and of yours and others beside them too who you do not know. God knows them. And whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you. And you shall not be given any less.

وَ مِمَّنۡ حَوۡلَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَعۡرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوۡنَ ؕ وَ مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ ؔ مَرَدُوۡا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۟ لَا تَعۡلَمُهُمۡ ؕ نَحۡنُ نَعۡلَمُهُمۡ ؕ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمۡ مَّرَّتَيۡنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّوۡنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيۡمٍ. (۹:۱۰۱)

> And there are hypocrites among the villagers who live around you and among the inhabitants of Madīnah also. They have become adept in their hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them. We shall punish them twice. Then they will be driven towards a great torment. (9:101)

Moreover, there were foreign forces too like the Romans, the Ghassanids and the Persians etc. They came out in the open later when the whole of Arabia came under the sway of Islam. In the verse under discussion, the Qur'ān while directing the believers about the circumstances of those times has also referred to the hidden enemies of the near and the distant future. They should prepare themselves keeping in view the present and the future. They must not think that it is a temporary issue of the present.

The words "and whatever you spend for the cause of God shall be fully repaid to you; and you shall not be given any less" are meant to encourage the believers to spend for the preparations of the war. It may be kept in mind that "fully repaid to you" will be in accordance with the principle which God has prescribed for the reward of virtues and which has been mentioned at other instances in the Qur'ān.

وَاِنۡ جَنَحُوۡا لِلسَّلۡمِ فَاجۡنَحۡ لَهَا وَ تَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ﴿۶۱﴾ وَاِنۡ يُّرِيۡدُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّخۡدَعُوۡكَ فَاِنَّ حَسۡبَكَ اللّٰهُ ؕ هُوَ الَّذِيۡۤ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصۡرِهٖ وَ بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ وَ اَلَّفَ بَيۡنَ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ لَوۡ اَنۡفَقۡتَ مَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِيۡعًا مَّاۤ اَلَّفۡتَ بَيۡنَ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَلَّفَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿۶۳﴾[47]

The word سلم means "peace and compromise" and occurs in the feminine gender.

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[47] And if they people tilt towards peace, you also tilt to it and trust God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. And if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you. It is He who aided you through His help and through the believers and joined their hearts with one another. And had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts; but God joined them. Indeed, He is Mighty and Wise.

Earlier the objective of war stated was to make Islam prevail in the whole of Arabia and no persecution remains. This meant that the war with the Quraysh would not end until every trace of disbelief and polytheism was eradicated. In the verse under discussion, it is stated that it is not against the given directive if peace is made with the Quraysh at some stage if they take its initiative. The Prophet (sws) was given the permission to accept this initiative. Keeping in view, the malice and enmity that the leaders of the Quraysh had shown against the believers until that time, it was not expected that they would ever sincerely come forward with such a suggestion. On the contrary, it was very much probable that they would try to deceive the believers through it. For this reason, the issue of depending on them was something very difficult. However, since the dictates of collective justice entail that the offer of peace by the enemy should not be turned down, the Prophet (sws) was directed to accept it in spite of the possibility of deception. He should trust God Who hears and knows all. If while trusting God, he bears the risk of danger for a good purpose, God will help the Prophet (sws), and his enemies will not be able to misuse it.

The words "and if they try to deceive you, God is sufficient for you" imply what best can happen: deception. And if this happens, God is enough for their support. The profundity of God being sufficient for the believers is beyond words. In fact, without expression, it is very evident. Here, a thing especially worthy of note is that the justice to which Islam urges people in their personal lives is the same it urges them in their international affair. The latter is done while specifying that even if there is any danger or threat in accepting terms of peace, this suggestion should not be turned down. In fact, should be accepted by trusting God. The words "and trust God" should be specially kept in consideration: it is not in the four walls of the mosque that trust is needed; in a battlefield, it is the real strength of the believers and is also a support for them in international affairs.

The words "it is He who aided you through His help and through the believers" state the reason why God is sufficient for the believers: the God Who helped them in the battle of Badr through His angels and a handful of them were able to crush the huge army of the enemy, will also help them if these enemies try to attack them in the garb of their suggestion of peace. He will not let them misuse this virtuous deed.

The words "and had you even spent whatever is in the earth, you would not have been able to join their hearts" explain what was said earlier that God will help the Prophet (sws) through the believers: it is not something ordinary; it is only possible because of divine help. It is not difficult to gather people for a satanic purpose. Every ardent advocate can do this. However, to gather some selfless people purely for God's cause in which the purpose is none else but to please Him and to maintain the priority of the Hereafter is not possible without divine help and blessings. People who had gathered around the Prophet (sws) had been incriminated with all sorts of evils in their previous lives before they accepted faith. They had separate tribes; they were severely biased; each tribe had its own deities and these people would blindly worship them; their interests mutually clashed and to realize them they would use all sorts of illegal means and defy the norms of justice. To cleanse such a people from all their prejudices and vested interests and from all their customs and traditions was not possible without divine help. This help transformed them into individuals with a new outlook and also instilled in them the love of this outlook to the extent that they were ready to sacrifice their wives, children, assets, families, tribes, country and nation. Only God can do this. No human being can accomplish this task even if he spends all the wealth of the world for this purpose.

God is Mighty and Wise. He accomplishes whatever task He intends to and all His tasks are based on wisdom. Here the indication is towards the divine law of guidance.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ
عِشْرُوْنَ صٰبِرُوْنَ يَغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾[48]

The first of these verses forms a prelude to the directive given to the Prophet (sws) in the second regarding urging the believers to war. The implication is that for him God's companionship and that of a handful of believers is sufficient. He should not be worried about the large number of his enemy and the small number of his own companions. In other words, this is the same statement of assurance that was given earlier in verse 62: "God is sufficient for you; it is He who aided you through His help and through the believers." Some people opine that by regarding the words "and the believers who have chosen to follow you" to be connected to God produces an element of polytheism. However, this opinion emerges from not reflecting on the context. The interpretation I have done is very clear and in accordance with parallel verses of the Qur'ān and is without any element of polytheism in it.

The words: "O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war" are an explanation of what is stated earlier. Even though his companions are small in number but they are actually large if their insight in faith is taken into consideration. On the other hand, his rivals are totally devoid of it.

فقه refers to the insight of faith. It is this insight which is man's real quality. When a believer who is equipped with it sets foot in the battlefield, he finds within his solitary soul the power of a whole army. He experiences Divine help around him and death becomes dearer to him than life. The reason is that his insight illuminates before him the exalted destination in Paradise reserved for martyrs. It is this very insight which produces in him the perseverance and strength that make him equal in might to ten

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48. O Prophet! Sufficient is God for you and sufficient are these believers who have chosen to follow you. O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war. If there are twenty among you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred; and if a hundred, they shall subdue a thousand of the disbelievers. This is because these are a people without insight.

people who are devoid of it.

اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَ عَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ؕ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْۤا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۶۶﴾[49]

The word “now” in this verse concomitantly indicates that this verse was revealed much later than the previous one. It was revealed when the number of believers had increased. Thus the proportion of dominating the disbelievers also changed from 1:10 to 1:2. The numbers mentioned in this verse (hundred and two hundred; thousand and two thousand) in comparison to the previous one (twenty and two hundred; hundred and thousand) also show that this verse relates to the period in which the number of believers had increased. Since this verse topically related to the previous one, it was placed here. This placement in itself is a proof of coherence found in the Qur’ān.

The fact that ten believers will prevail on a hundred disbelievers is stated as a glad tiding. However, this also imposes a heavy responsibility on the believers: they must not turn their backs if they face their enemy in such a ratio. As stated in verse 16 earlier, since turning one’s back in a battle is a great sin, the believers must have naturally regarded this to be an onerous responsibility and would have tried to fulfil it conscientiously. Later, as the verse under discussion states, this proportion decreased.

Two reasons are evident from the words of this verse regarding the reduction in proportion:

First, when with God’s blessings, the number of the believers increased, He graciously reduced the responsibility imposed on later Muslims than the ones on the سٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ (the pioneer converts). It was reduced to 1:2 from the original 1:10.

Second, people who later entered the folds of Islam did not have the same insight of faith as the pioneer converts. In their collective capacity, the extent of this insight was much less and hence the responsibility was reduced. The word ضَعْف (*ḍa‘f*) in Arabic is not only used for material and physical weakness but also for weakness in determination, insight and faith.

Deliberation shows that these verses of Sūrah al-Anfāl also highlight the principle on which divine help descends on the believers. The basic thing that entitles them to this help is perseverance. Without this trait they do not become worthy of help. Secondly, the proportion in which means and resources increase, the help of God reduces by the same proportion. Thirdly, real strength is the strength of faith. The rest come under it. Fourthly, whatever happens, happens at God’s bidding. Hence, God should be trusted and not the resources.

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49. Now God has lessened your responsibility and He knew that some weakness has come into you: So, if there are a hundred of you who are steadfast, they shall subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they shall subdue two thousand with the directive of God. And God is with those who remain steadfast.

Section VII: Verses (67-71)

In the succeeding verses, the propaganda launched by the Quraysh against the believers after being defeated in the battle of Badr is responded to. Before this battle, they regarded the weakness of the believers to be a proof against the veracity of Islam, as has been mentioned in detail earlier. They contended that if this was a true religion, why would such weak individuals be made its recipients? If Muḥammad (sws) was a true prophet, would he have had such meagre means and resources? Had Islam been a true religion, why were its rivals not inflicted with punishment? In short, they regarded their dominance and Islam's weakness to be a proof of their being right and Islam being wrong. So much so, they contended victory in the battle of Badr a barometer of success. Their leaders openly declared that whoever wins in this battle, will be regarded to be a follower of the truth and vice versa. Ultimately, when the result came out to be against their expectation and against their own criterion of success, they started to change the direction of their propaganda in order to protect their people from the negative effects of defeat. They now started to say that how can a prophet instigate war among the people of his own nation, cause massacre in the land, have his own people captured and made prisoners, exact ransom and distribute it among his own people? They meant that all these things can only be done by those who seek political authority and worldly gains? How can such a person be a prophet and have anything to do with God?

The Quraysh, on the one hand, wanted to protect their people from the negative effects of the battle lest they accept the veracity of Islam and Muḥammad because of this crushing defeat suffered. On the other hand, they very cleverly wanted to strike a blow at the zeal for *jihād* which naturally became evident in the believers after the battle. These circumstances entailed that an answer by given to this propaganda so that at least the believers are not negatively influenced in any way. Thus all these related groups are addressed here and given a rejoinder.

First the leaders of the Quraysh are addressed and told that the responsibility of what happened lies on them and not on the Prophet (sws). No prophet would ever think of capturing prisoners, receive ransom and cause carnage in the land to loot the spoils of war. It is they who like to do this and not God. They should be thankful that matters did not worsen. Otherwise the mischief they had spread entailed a painful torment for them from God. However, every event has been prescribed a time by Him. For this reason, some respite has been given to them.

After that, the believers are addressed and told to not be influenced in any way by the propaganda of these mischief-mongers. The spoils of war they have acquired are absolutely permissible.

In this regard, a message is given to the prisoners of the battle of Badr who were set free after the payment of ransom that they should not be sad on this payment. It is a favour done to them. If they value this favour, it may well be that God does more favours to them. However, if they do not value this favour and again come back to wage war against Islam, they should remember that they will see more suffering than before.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِیٍّ اَنۡ یَّكُوۡنَ لَهٗۤ اَسۡرٰی حَتّٰی یُثۡخِنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ تُرِیۡدُوۡنَ عَرَضَ الدُّنۡیَا ٭ۖ وَاللّٰهُ یُرِیۡدُ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِیۡزٌ حَكِیۡمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾ لَوۡ
لَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمۡ فِیۡمَاۤ اَخَذۡتُمۡ عَذَابٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَكُلُوۡا مِمَّا غَنِمۡتُمۡ حَلٰلًا طَیِّبًا ۫ۖ وَّ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ
رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾ یٰۤاَیُّهَا النَّبِیُّ قُلۡ لِّمَنۡ فِیۡۤ اَیۡدِیۡكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَسۡرٰۤی ۙ اِنۡ یَّعۡلَمِ اللّٰهُ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ خَیۡرًا یُّؤۡتِكُمۡ خَیۡرًا مِّمَّاۤ اُخِذَ مِنۡكُمۡ وَیَغۡفِرۡ
لَكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَاِنۡ یُّرِیۡدُوۡا خِیَانَتَكَ فَقَدۡ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَاَمۡكَنَ مِنۡهُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِیۡمٌ حَكِیۡمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

It is not befitting for any prophet that he capture prisoners so that he even cause bloodshed in the land for it. It is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter. And God is Powerful and Wise. Had God’s verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you because of the attitude you had adopted. (67-68)

Thus the spoils of war you have obtained, consume them by regarding them to be lawful and pure. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (69)

O Prophet! Inform the captives in your possession: If God sees something good in your hearts, He shall grant you that which is better than what has been taken from you and shall forgive your sins. And God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God. Thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise. (70-71)

Explanation

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِیٍّ اَنۡ یَّكُوۡنَ لَهٗۤ اَسۡرٰی حَتّٰی یُثۡخِنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ تُرِیۡدُوۡنَ عَرَضَ الدُّنۡیَا ٭ۖ وَاللّٰهُ یُرِیۡدُ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِیۡزٌ حَكِیۡمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾
لَوۡلَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمۡ فِیۡمَاۤ اَخَذۡتُمۡ عَذَابٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾[50]

The style مَا كَانَ لِنَبِیٍّ اَنۡ یَّكُوۡنَ لَهٗۤ اَسۡرٰی is meant to state a blame as well as to absolve some of a blame. It is used both ways in the Qur’ān and the context, occasion and addressees readily determine in which sense it is used. Precisely the same style can be seen in verse 161 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān: وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِیٍّ اَنۡ یَّغُلَّ ؕ وَمَنۡ یَّغۡلُلۡ یَاۡتِ بِمَا غَلَّ یَوۡمَ الۡقِیٰمَةِ (it is not in accordance with the stature of any prophet to be dishonest and he who does so shall be brought on the Day of Judgement with his ill-wish.) Obviously, this verse absolves the Prophet (sws) from the blame mentioned. All exegetes are unanimous about this verse that it addresses the hypocrites regarding their accusation on the Prophet (sws). It is something which only reflects on their own selves. No prophet can ever indulge in dishonesty and betrayal. In precisely the same style, in the verse under discussion, the blame caste by the Quraysh on the Prophet (sws) is refuted. They had alleged that he, because of his greed for power, caused bloodshed among his brethren, had some of them captured, plundered their wealth and exacted ransom from them. These blames are only meant to cover up their own guilt. No prophet can ever do these things. They accuse the Prophet of these things because they regard him to be analogous to their own selves.

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[50] It is not befitting for any prophet that he capture prisoners so that he even cause bloodshed in the land for it. It is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter. And God is Powerful and Wise. Had God’s verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you because of the attitude you had adopted.

The words "it is you who want the provisions of this world; God only wants the Hereafter" address the Quraysh. The style of address in the Qur'ān is like that of an adept orator. It addresses all the factions in front of him one after the other keeping in consideration their views. What is said itself explains the addressees it is directed to and which of its doubts or objections are answered. Here too, it is the same situation. There is absolutely no possibility to regard the believers and among them the Prophet (sws) and Abū Bakr (rta) to be the addressee of these words. However, if for the sake of discussion and that too with a heavy heart, they are regarded to be addressees, then how can one dare imagine they are the addressees o the next verse too?

Nevertheless, in my opinion, these words address the Quraysh and give an answer to the propaganda they had spread. Here the eloquence of the discourse should be kept in mind: it was not said that the Prophet and the believers want the hereafter; on the contrary, it was said that God wants the hereafter. The purpose of this is to express the fact that whatever is happening through the hands of the Messenger of God and the believers is not happening because of their will and intention; they are mere means in this whole undertaking. Whatever they are doing is precisely the will and intention of God. It is the will of God for His people that if they do everything while keeping in mind that their real objective is the Hereafter, then no step taken by God's messenger and his companions is against the will of God. In other words, God has taken upon Himself the responsibility of the battle of Badr and all other undertakings of similar nature. In the end, it is said that God is powerful and wise. No one can stop Him if He decides to do something and whatever He intends to do is based on justice and wisdom. Whatever frivolous talk they are indulging in, they should continue with it.

The words "had God's verdict not already existed, a great torment would have visited you" imply that these people are expressing dismay at what has happened to them even though this was just a small reversal in the eyes of God. The prank they played at that instance entailed that a great torment should have seized them; however, God has prescribed a time for each nation. Before this time, its fate hangs in the balance. For this reason, He has given the Quraysh a period of respite. In other words, instead of raising hue and cry on what has happened, it is better that they take advantage of this opportunity and reform themselves before the decisive verdict visits them.

Consider the expression فِيْمَآ اَخَذْتُمْ. No elucidation exists in the ambiguity found in مَآ. The verb اَخَذَ means “to take”, “to get hold of”, “to adopt”, “to begin a task” etc. In verse 50 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, it is stated: وَاِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيْبَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا قَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ.[51] In the verse under discussion, the expression implies that the attitude they have adopted entailed that a great torment visit them but they have been granted respite under God’s law.

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in the interpretation of this verse. They are of the view that these verses rebuke the Prophet (sws), Abū Bakr (rta) and others for accepting ransom from the prisoners of the battle of Badr before causing enough bloodshed in the land. There seems no need to refute this incorrect view once the correct view has been presented. However, I will nevertheless state some important points here.

1. If it is supposed that the Prophet (sws) and the companions erred in accepting this ransom, it was not of the nature of violating a previous prohibition. It was purely an error of judgement. Such an error does not entail that they be warned of a grave punishment, especially when this error was actually not regarded as an error right after by the Almighty.

2. This cannot even be counted as an error of judgement. It has already been stated in Sūrah Muḥammad that prisoners of war can executed or released with or without ransom.

3. As far as bloodshed is concerned, it was fully took place in this battle. Seventy people from the Quraysh which included their great leaders had been killed in it and almost the same number was captured. The rest of the army ran away. So what was the use of continuing with the battle?

4. The words which mention the torment are very specific in the diction of the Qur’ān. They are only used to express anger on die-hard disbelievers and hypocrites and none else. Citations may increase the bulk of this explanation. Those who have any doubt can take a look at all instances in which the expression لَوْلَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ occurs.

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝٦٩ [52]

Now the believers are addressed and told to not care about the foolish talk of these people and consume the spoils without any reluctance. This verse is co-ordinated to the previous verse with the particle ف because this verse is part of what is stated in the previous verse in defence of the believers. The only difference is that the previous verse addressed the Quraysh because it was they who needed to be addressed and told what was said. The direction of address of this verse has turned towards the believers because it was meant for them. A very pertinent example of this style can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah Yūsuf:

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[51] And if some calamity befalls you, they say: “Good that this happened. We had already secured ourselves,” and they return joyous.

[52] Thus the spoils of war you have obtained, consume them by regarding them to be lawful and pure. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

يُوْسُفُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ ۚ اِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِـِٕيْنَ . (١٢: ٢٩)

> Joseph, leave aside this matter and O you woman! Seek repentance for your sin. Indeed, you are the wrongdoer. (12:29)

Readers can see that in one breath the chief of Egypt has addressed both Joseph (sws) and his own wife. This change of addressee is evident from the content as well as direction of address.

The verse under discussion assures the believers that the spoils of war are lawful. The purpose of this assurance actually is to answer the Quraysh. It has been pointed out earlier that after the battle of Badr they had raised the propaganda that these believers claim to be religious but what they do is against religion. How can religious people cause bloodshed, loot spoils, accept ransom and merrily consume it? Only people who are after worldly gains and pleasures do such things. The Qur'ān has consoled the believers to disregard such edicts of these religious pundits. They regard them to be sinners whatever they may do. If the believers had lost in this battle, their defeat would have proved to the Quraysh that they were on the wrong. Now that they have won the battle, capturing prisoners and accepting ransom and using it is a proof that they are on the wrong. The only way to deal with these people is to disregard them and consume from the victories God has destined for them.

It may be kept in mind that in those days the monastic concept of religion prevailed. Hence it cannot be ruled out that many pious believers would have been influenced by this propaganda. This could in turn have adversely affected the zeal for *jihād* – to which they were being invited in this *sūrah* – of the Muslims. By refuting it, the Qur'ān ended any possibility of this taking place.

The implication of "and keep fearing God; indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful" is that the believers should consume what it is permissible and pure; however, they must keep fearing God lest they stumble into something that has been prohibited by Him. If they do not cross the limits set by Him, their minor sins will be forgiven by Him because He is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَنْ فِيْۤ اَيْدِيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَسْرٰۤى ۙ اِنْ يَّعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُّؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّاۤ اُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ؕ وَ

اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٧١﴾[53]

These verses convey a message to the prisoners of Badr as is evident. They have been set free instead of being executed. Hence they must be thankful to God and His prophet instead of being sorrowful. A great favour has been done to them and as a result they must once again review their attitude. Instead of being emotional, they must rationally and justly reflect on whatever has happened. If they do this, they will value this favour from God and this will direct God's mercy and grace to them. They will be given far greater in the form of Islam than what has been taken from them in the form of this ransom. Their sins will be forgiven.

The words "and if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God; thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise" sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and threaten the prisoners of Badr. While addressing the Prophet (sws), it is said that if the Quraysh show treachery and do not value his favour to them, and come again to fight, they will not succeed. They themselves will be doomed. Before this, they betrayed God and were punished by the hands of the believers. If they repeat this, they will again be defeated by the believers and they will suffer the punishment of this betrayal. Details of the betrayal referred to here have been point to earlier. God made them the guardian of His House and consigned to them the inheritance of the religion of Abraham (sws); however, they violated the sanctity of this House and distorted this religion. The consequences of this are before them. If they want to continue to go further in their crime, it is their choice; they will taste its fruit.

If both these verses are deliberated upon, one thing becomes clear: if the Prophet (sws) released the prisoners of the battle of Badr by taking ransom, then this was not only not objected to by God, it was, in fact, liked by Him. The Prophet (sws) was asked by Him to let these prisoners know that if they value this favour done to them, it will open the way to Islam and forgiveness for them. This is the correct interpretation of the verses. It is totally different than the one presented in certain narratives found in *tafsīr* books. These narratives say that the verses actually admonish the Prophet (sws) for capturing prisoners and accepting ransom for them without fully shedding blood in the land.

Section VIII: Verses (72-75)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. Believers are told to come together as a single unit. The criteria in this regard should be their faith and migration to Madīnah. These two things should also be the basis of their mutual help and support. Relations that existed before the advent of Islam in the *jāhiliyyah* society of Arabia were terminated forthwith. It was said that those who accept faith, migrate to Madīnah, start to live here and fight with the believers against the disbelievers are actually brothers and friends of one another. In other words, the believers were directed to organize the Islamic society on its distinctive foundations and features. The purpose was to unite the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* in solid defence against the union of the disbelievers. Believers are also roused to undertake war against them. This directive together with a preparation of war is also the prelude to the declaration of acquittal announced in the next *sūrah*.

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[53] O Prophet! Inform the captives in your possession: If God sees something good in your hearts, He shall grant you that which is better than what has been taken from you and shall forgive your sins. And God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if they seek to betray you, then before this they have betrayed God. Thus God made you overpower them and God is knowledgeable and wise.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ ہَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰہَدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِہِمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰوَوۡا وَّ نَصَرُوۡۤا اُولٰٓئِکَ بَعۡضُہُمۡ اَوۡلِیَآءُ
بَعۡضٍ ؕ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ لَمۡ یُہَاجِرُوۡا مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ وَّلَایَتِہِمۡ مِّنۡ شَیۡءٍ حَتّٰی یُہَاجِرُوۡا ۚ وَ اِنِ اسۡتَنۡصَرُوۡکُمۡ فِی الدِّیۡنِ فَعَلَیۡکُمُ
النَّصۡرُ اِلَّا عَلٰی قَوۡمٍۭ بَیۡنَکُمۡ وَ بَیۡنَہُمۡ مِّیۡثَاقٌ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا بَعۡضُہُمۡ اَوۡلِیَآءُ بَعۡضٍ ؕ اِلَّا
تَفۡعَلُوۡہُ تَکُنۡ فِتۡنَۃٌ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ فَسَادٌ کَبِیۡرٌ ﴿ؕ۷۳﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ ہَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰہَدُوۡا فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰوَوۡا وَّ نَصَرُوۡۤا
اُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ حَقًّا ؕ لَہُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَۃٌ وَّ رِزۡقٌ کَرِیۡمٌ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدُ وَ ہَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰہَدُوۡا مَعَکُمۡ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ
مِنۡکُمۡ ؕ وَ اُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُہُمۡ اَوۡلٰی بِبَعۡضٍ فِیۡ کِتٰبِ اللّٰہِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ بِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۷۵﴾

Those who accepted faith and migrated and fought with their persons and wealth for the cause of God and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they are the ones who are friends of one another. As for those who accepted faith, but did not migrate, you can have no relationship of help and support with them until they migrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of religion, helping them is mandatory upon you except if the help is against a nation with whom you have a treaty. And God is watching whatever you do. And those who denied the truth are helpers and supporters of one another. So, if you do not do this, there will be persecution in the land and great disorder. And those who accepted faith, migrated and waged *jihād* for the cause of God, and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they who are true believers. For them are forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. And those who accepted faith after this and migrated and participated with you in *jihād*, they too are among you. And blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God. Indeed, God knows everything. (72-75)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ ہَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰہَدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِہِمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰوَوۡا وَّ نَصَرُوۡۤا اُولٰٓئِکَ بَعۡضُہُمۡ اَوۡلِیَآءُ

بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّن وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٢﴾[54]

Before the advent of Islam, the basis of mutual help and support was one's family and tribe. If a person or a family was threatened with some danger, his family or tribe would go to the last limit to defend him. The bases of help and support in the society which Islam created in Madīnah were faith and migration to Madīnah.

Obviously the words "those who migrated" refer to the *muhājirūn* and "those who gave refuge" refer to the *anṣār*. Both these groups are alluded to with regard to their traits and religious services and are not referred to by their actual names. This is an indication to the fact that in this new society, instead of family and lineage, the real reason of preference would be faith, migration and *jihād*. These groups would be helpers and supporters of one another. Obviously, this help and support would be against the disbelievers. Though the style of verse is like a statement of fact; it also implies a command. In other words, the believers are directed to help and support one another against the disbelievers and do the needful when the situation arises.

Believers have no responsibility of helping those who did not migrate even after accepting faith. The reason obviously was that it would have been practically not possible to do so. Also many international complications could also have arisen. Moreover, at that time it was essential that all those who had accepted faith should leave the abodes of disbelievers and gather in Madīnah. This was because they could be organized to put an end to the persecution let loose by the disbelievers and to have the House of God liberated from their clutches. However, in this case too treaties must be honoured. The words "and God is watching whatever you do" are meant to emphasize the sanctity of a treaty. In other words, whatever step is taken to violate the treaty whether openly or secretly is in God's knowledge.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُن فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٧٣﴾[55]

This verse states the reason why it is essential to help the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers. It is stated that as far as enmity with Muslims and Islam is concerned, all disbelievers are united. It is a matter of reward for them to persecute and harass any person who accepts Islam. Matters have reached the state that the honour of their own brethren to save them from the clutches of the oppressor has dashed to ground. Their lives and wealth have now become legal for consumption. If in such a situation, even Muslims do not help these people, it will mean that in order to persecute people oppression and injustice will become rampant in the land.

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[54] Those who accepted faith and migrated and fought with their persons and wealth for the cause of God and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they are the ones who are friends of one another. As for those who accepted faith, but did not migrate, you can have no relationship of help and support with them until they migrate. And if they seek your help in the matter of religion, helping them is mandatory upon you except if the help is against a nation with whom you have a treaty. And God is watching whatever you do.

[55] And those who denied the truth are helpers and supporters of one another. So, if you do not do this, there will be persecution in the land and great disorder. .

The antecedent of the pronoun in اِلَّا تَفْعَلُوْهُ is the help mentioned as فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ in the previous verse.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰوَوْا وَّنَصَرُوْٓا اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا ۭ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾[56]

This verse regards migration to Madīnah as the barometer of the veracity of faith of the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers. It is evident from the words of this verse that it is the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* who are the real treasure of Islam. As for those who have professed faith but have not migrated from this territory, it is essential that they migrate to Madīnah and participate in *jihād* equally with the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* in order to prove that they have true faith. The purpose of migration also becomes evident from this that I have indicated earlier: to organize the believers for *jihād*. Another evident indication is that migration is a benchmark between faith and hypocrisy. Thus it will become clear from Sūrah al-Tawbah, the next *sūrah* that those who laid claim to faith but without any legitimate excuse did not migrate right until the end shall be regarded among the hypocrites.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا مَعَكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ۭ وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾[57]

This verse urges the believers living in the territory of the disbelievers to migrate to Madīnah and obtain a position of honour for themselves. At the same time, it emphasizes upon the believers living in Muslim territories to welcome the immigrants; they are their brothers and part of their collectivity. Neither should they regard themselves to be superior to them nor have any ill-will against them.

The words "and blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God" refer to the special principle of rights and inheritance that exists between blood relations. This is in contrast to the general principle of brotherhood and help mentioned earlier. The implication is that the rights of blood relations prescribed by God will continue as before. This new brotherhood will not change them in any way. Blood relations are qualified by the clause “in the law of God.” This means that the rights referred to are the ones that ensue from blood and kinship and which are mentioned in the law of God. They exclude the ones that existed in the *jāhiliyyah* society of Arabia. At other instances in the Qur’ān too, where the believers have been directed to be kind to their brethren in faith and to help them, it is stated there that the legal rights of the blood relatives will always superior. Thus in verse 6 of Sūrah Aḥzāb, it is stated: وَ اُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِىْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَفْعَلُوْۤا اِلٰۤى اَوْلِيٰٓـِٕكُمْ مَّعْرُوْفًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِى الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا.[58]

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[56] And those who accepted faith, migrated and waged *jihād* for the cause of God, and those who gave refuge and helped, it is they who are true believers. For them are forgiveness and an honourable sustenance.

[57] And those who accepted faith after this and migrated and participated with you in *jihād*, they too are among you. And blood relations are closer to one another in the law of God. Indeed, God knows everything.

The words “indeed, God knows everything” refer to the fact that God’s knowledge is perfect and He has prescribed a place and status of everything. Religious brotherhood and relations have their own sphere and blood relations have their own significance. Both should be respected in their own specifics and their rights should be discharged.

If this section of verses is deliberated upon, some principles of an Islamic state can be gauged which have both national and international import. They are referred to here briefly:

1. The *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* are friends and compatriots of one another. They are connected to one another on the basis of faith and migration. It is because of these two foundations that they have rights and responsibilities related to brotherhood and mutual help. Previously this connection was due to tribal interests. It stood abolished. Now mutual help was to be based on Islamic brotherhood.
2. Those who have professed faith but have not migrated to Madīnah from their territory among the disbelievers will not be helped until they migrate.
3. If believers living in the territory of the disbelievers are persecuted, helping them is essential unless they are at war with a nation with whom the believers have a treaty.
4. Migration was made incumbent on every believer so that they can be organized to wage war against the disbelievers,
5. The rights prescribed by the Qur’ān regarding blood relations will always remain superior to the ones that Islamic brotherhood entail.

This brings us to an end of the explanation of this *sūrah*. وَ اٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
19 February 1969

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[58] And that blood relations are closer to one another than to other believers and the *muhājirūn* in the law of God, yet you are permitted to treat your friends and relatives kindly. This is decreed in the Book.

Sūrah al-Tawbah

This *sūrah* is the last one of chapter 2. Its relationship with Sūrah al-Anfāl, the previous *sūrah* is the same as what a text has with its explanation or what a premise has with its real objective. A declaration is made in it of the *jihād* for which Muslims were organized in Sūrah Anfāl. In the arrangement of the Qur'ān the formulaic basmallah is not written at its beginning and it is evident from certain narratives that this lack of mention has been handed down since the times of the Prophet (sws). This shows that it was done at the behest of God. Our exegetes have explained this in various ways. The most convincing of these in my opinion is the one which says that there is very a close proximity between the theme and subject matter of the two *sūrahs* and at the same time both are distinct from one another with regard to their objective. The first of these is directed entirely to the Muslims and the second primarily to the Idolaters, People of the Book and the Hypocrites. The first one prepares the Muslims for war and the second gives an ultimatum for war and declares it. In order to distinguish both these common and diverse aspects, the wisdom of God entailed that this *sūrah* should not be totally separated from the previous one and at the same time be distinct from it too. Both these aspects become evident by not writing the *basmallah*. It has been pointed out at other instances that the *basmallah* acts as a divider between two *sūrahs*. By not being present here, the proximity of the two with regard to their meaning becomes evident and at the same time, the independent nature of this *sūrah* gives it a new name which becomes a means of its distinctive nature too.

Analysis of Meanings

First a declaration of acquittal is sounded from the Idolaters who had struck agreements with the Prophet (sws) that ensured peace but they made them null and void by breaking them. For those who had honoured their agreements, it was announced that once their time-period expires, they will not be renewed and war shall be waged against them until they accept Islam.

After this, it was declared regarding the People of the Book that war should also be waged against them until they become subservient or are forced to pay *jizyah.*

After this, the Hypocrites are taken to task until the end of the *sūrah* and Muslims are directed to sternly hold them accountable; no softness should be shown to them so that either they become true believers or reach the fate of the Idolaters or the People of the Book – depending on which of them they associate themselves with.

At that time, it was these three groups which were the open or hidden enemies of the Muslims. These groups were mentioned in the previous *sūrah* also but no ultimate policy was given about them. However, in this *sūrah*, this policy is clearly stated.

This brief look at contents is enough to show the sequence of discussion in this *sūrah.* Yet, a detailed analysis is done in the following paragraphs too.

Verses (1-4): Acquittal is sounded from the Idolaters who had overtly or covertly broken their agreements. They are given a respite of four months and Muslims are directed to proclaim this at the time of *ḥajj* that God and His Messenger (sws) are now absolved from the responsibility of these agreements, If these Idolaters repent, it is better for them. If they do not, they should remember that they are not beyond God's grasp. Only those Idolaters are an exception to this directive who did not break their agreements and also not helped the enemies of the Muslims against them. These agreements will continue until their specified period.

Verses (5-6): Muslims are directed to wage war against them after the sacred months are over. They should lie in ambush for them, seize and kill them and not let them go until they repent, show diligence in the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. However, if anyone of them seeks refuge, he should be granted so much refuge as he can hear the word of God. He should then be transported to his abode of safety. This concession is given to them because they have not been recipients of God's Book. It is possible that they may have not heard it.

Verses (7-16): Muslims are told that no new agreement can now be made with the Idolaters. Reasons for this are cited. The treaty which was struck with the Quraysh near the Sacred Mosque should be left intact. It should continue as long as they honour it. If they break it, Muslims must also wage war against these leaders of disbelief. Some grave crimes of the Quraysh are pointed to. Muslims are given glad tidings that they should not fear them; they should fight them; through them God will soothe oppressed Muslims who are the targets of their aggression.

Verses (17-22): The Idolaters of Quraysh have no right to remain the custodians of the House of God. Only they have this right who have belief in God and in the Hereafter, adhere to the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. To provide pilgrims with drinking water and look after the mosque of God are deeds of virtue but they cannot substitute belief in the Hereafter and war for the cause of God.

Verses (23-28): Muslims are warned that waging war against the Idolaters should be desisted from if they are related to them in family ties. They who give preference to such ties over the requisites of faith deserve to be counted among them. The love of God and His Prophet (sws) holds priority over everything. Muslims are reminded of a lesson from earlier wars and from the war of Ḥunayn: the real thing is God's help. Thus on God should they actually rely. It is declared that the Idolaters are unclean. For this reason, after this year, they should not be allowed to come near the Sacred Mosque. Muslims are assured that God will generously compensate them for any financial losses they may incur as a result.

Verses (29-35): Muslims are directed to wage war against the People of the Book and make them *dhimmīs* and exact the *jizyah* from them. Some references are made to the evils found in their beliefs and morals. The unworthy character and animosity against Islam of their scholars and sages are alluded to.

Verses (36-37): It is emphasized upon the Muslims that though this war against the Idolaters should be in the collective capacity, concession should be shown to none of their groups. However, sacred months must be given due respect. These sacred lunar months are the remnants of the religion of Abraham (sws). If they violate their sanctity, Muslims would be guilty of being unjust to their own souls. The religious innovation of Nasī' is pointed to and it is said that it has displaced these months from their actual calendar and linked them with the seasons and this is an increase in disbelief. Muslims must maintain the sanctity of these four months which have been prescribed by God from the very beginning on the basis of the lunar calendar.

Verses (38-42): The Hypocrites are warned that if they try to evade the directive of *jihād*, they will not harm God in any way; they will only be unjust to their own souls. God can replace them with others to help His religion. They should remember that there was a day in the past when God's Messenger had sought refuge in a cave and had only a single companion with him. Yet there came a day when God sent down His tranquillity, helped him with His own forces, disbelief was routed and the word of God prevailed. Thus God does not need human beings for this purpose. It is their own good fortune that they should wage war with whatever resources they may have.

An example is then given of the Hypocrites using false oaths to evade participating in *jihād*.

Verses (43-46): The Prophet (sws) is lovingly chided since he accepted the false excuses of those who wanted to desist from *jihād* even though they were Hypocrites. They can arrange for the resources to go put for *jihād* but they make false excuses taking advantage of his softness.

Verses (47-52): God's Messenger (sws) is assured that if these Hypocrites have not joined him for *jihād*, it is actually in his favour. If they had gone, they would have spread some mischief or the other. They are not well-wishers of the Muslims in any way. They want some calamity to strike them come what may.

Verses (53-57): Whatever the Hypocrites spend for the cause of religion carries no weight in the eyes of God. They deny God and His Prophet (sws) and their spending and their prayer are merely for pretence. The Prophet (sws) is directed to not give any importance to their wealth or their companionship. These cowards cannot be his companions.

Verses (58-60): A group of the Hypocrites is referred to which were with the Prophet (sws) as long as they had their share in charity money. If they received the amount that pleased them, they would be happy and if not, they would utter all kinds of evil things. After that, the real recipients of charity are enlisted.

Verses (61-66): The miscreants among these Hypocrites are referred to who would spread propaganda against the Prophet (sws). They would contend that he is gullible and make fun of his opinions and insights in front of people. When called to account, they would swear false oaths and present ridiculous excuses.

Verses (67-70): The character of men and women among the Hypocrites is depicted along with their fate in this world and the next.

Verses (71-72): The character of men and women among the believers is depicted along with their success in the hereafter.

Verses (73-78): The Prophet (sws) is told to be stern with these Hypocrites like the disbelievers so that they are no longer able to cling to Islam by taking advantage of his softness. They hide their disbelief behind their false oaths. God's grace and the Prophet's softness have made them more audacious in their enmity for Islam. They have gone back on their promises and this has actually increased them in their hypocrisy.

Verses (79-84): A prank of the Hypocrites is referred to: they themselves do not spend for the cause of God and if the sincere servants of God spent out of their hard-earned wealth, they make fun of them and discourage them. In a similar way, they would not go out for *jihād* and try to discourage those who went out for it by citing adverse weather for this. God's warning about them is stated and the Prophet (sws) is stopped from seeking forgiveness for them.

Verses (85-96): The false excuses of those who were desisting from following what religion demands from them are alluded to. The character of true believers is depicted. People whose excuses are worthy of acceptance are detailed out. Those having lame excuses are threatened that even if they succeed in deceiving the Prophet (sws) and his companions because of their false excuses, this would never be of benefit to them. Their excuses cannot deceive God Who knows the hidden and the apparent.

Verses (97-101): The Hypocrites among the Bedouins are alluded to and the sincere among them are encouraged. The foremost in faith (*sābiqūn*) and those who follow them are praised. The Hypocrites among the Bedouins and in Madīnah are warned.

Verses (102-106): Glad tidings of acceptance of repentance of those people are mentioned who had changed their attitude after these warnings. The Prophet (sws) is directed to further train and instruct them and to pray for them. Forgiveness of some among this group is deferred.

Verses (107-110): A very harsh warning is sounded to those who had built the Ḍarār mosque. The Prophet (sws) is stopped from praying in it.

Verses (111-113): An explanation of the covenant between God and the believers and its true requisites are mentioned.

Verses (114-116): The Prophet (sws) and the believers are stopped from praying for forgiveness for those who die as Idolaters, even if they are closely related. The nature of the prayer of forgiveness which Abraham (sws) made for this father is explained.

Verses (117-118): Glad tidings are given for the general acceptance of repentance for the Prophet and all sincere *muhājirūn* and *anṣār*. People whose repentance had been deferred in verse 106 is now accepted once they had totally made amends for it.

Verses (119-122): The people of Madīnah and the Bedouins are urged to sincerely and uprightly follow the Prophet (sws) and even sacrifice their lives if needed. Any small or big hardship they may suffer for this cause will earn them great reward. The Bedouins are directed that each of their groups should select people for the purpose of training and keep sending them to the Prophet (sws) so that after learning from him, they return and educate and instruct their own people.

Verses (123-129): A general directive is given to the Muslims: everyone of them should wage war against the disbelievers of their territory. Those who desist from facing the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) are referred to. A great mercy was sent to the world in the form of the Prophet (sws). People are urged to duly value it. He is told to trust God alone and ignore those who do not value his guidance.

A glance at this analysis shows that each section of this *sūrah* is coherently and meaningfully arranged and is related to one other in a very natural way from the very beginning to the end.

With God's help and grace, I now begin with the explanation of the *sūrah.*

Section 1: (1-28)

Text and Translation

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ؕ﴿۱﴾ فَسِيْحُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ
غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللّٰهِ ۙ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْزِي الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۲﴾ وَ اَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۙ۬ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ بَشِّرِ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۙ﴿۳﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّ لَمْ يُظَاهِرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ
اَحَدًا فَاَتِمُّوْۤا اِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ اِلٰى مُدَّتِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۴﴾ فَاِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا
الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ وَ خُذُوْهُمْ وَ احْصُرُوْهُمْ وَ اقْعُدُوْا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَوُا
الزَّكٰوةَ فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵﴾ وَ اِنْ اَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَاَجِرْهُ حَتّٰى يَسْمَعَ كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ
ثُمَّ اَبْلِغْهُ مَاْمَنَهٗ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾ كَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَّا
الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوْا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْا لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۷﴾ كَيْفَ وَ
اِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوْا فِيْكُمْ اِلًّا وَّ لَا ذِمَّةً ؕ يُرْضُوْنَكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ تَاْبٰى قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۚ وَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ۚ﴿۸﴾

اِشْتَرَوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (٩) لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِیْ مُؤْمِنٍ اِلًّا وَّ لَا
ذِمَّةً ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُوْنَ (١٠) فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِی الدِّيْنِ ؕ وَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ
لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (١١) وَ اِنْ نَّكَثُوْۤا اَيْمَانَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَ طَعَنُوْا فِیْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوْۤا اَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ لَاۤ اَيْمَانَ
لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُوْنَ (١٢) اَلَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ قَوْمًا نَّكَثُوْۤا اَيْمَانَهُمْ وَ هَمُّوْا بِاِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَ هُمْ بَدَءُوْكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ؕ
اَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (١٣) قَاتِلُوْهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ يُخْزِهِمْ وَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَ يَشْفِ صُدُوْرَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (١٤) وَ يُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ
حَكِيْمٌ (١٥) اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تُتْرَكُوْا وَ لَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَ لَمْ يَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَ لَا رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ لَا
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلِيْجَةً ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (١٦) مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ شٰهِدِيْنَ عَلٰۤى
اَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ ۚۖ وَ فِی النَّارِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ (١٧) اِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ
الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ اَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَ لَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰۤى اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِيْنَ (١٨) اَجَعَلْتُمْ
سِقَايَةَ الْحَآجِّ وَ عِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ جٰهَدَ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ عِنْدَ
اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (١٩) اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ هَاجَرُوْا وَ جٰهَدُوْا فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۙ
اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ (٢٠) يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَ رِضْوَانٍ وَّ جَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ
مُّقِيْمٌ (٢١) خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ (٢٢) يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْۤا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَ اِخْوَانَكُمْ
اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْاِيْمَانِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (٢٣) قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَ
اَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَ اِخْوَانُكُمْ وَ اَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَ عَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَ اَمْوَالُ ا۟قْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَ تِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَ مَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَاۤ
اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ جِهَادٍ فِیْ سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِیَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ
(٢٤) لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِیْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ وَّ يَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّ ضَاقَتْ
عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ (٢٥) ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ اَنْزَلَ
جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَ عَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (٢٦) ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (٢٧) يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا ۚ

وَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ عَيۡلَةً فَسَوۡفَ يُغۡنِيۡكُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖۤ اِنۡ شَآءَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۸﴾

A declaration of acquittal is made from God and His Messenger for these Idolaters with whom you had made agreements. So, walk about now in this land for four months and know that you cannot escape God’s grasp and that God shall certainly humiliate the disbelievers. And a general declaration should also be made among people from God and His Messenger on the day of the great *ḥajj* that God and His Messenger are free from obligations to the Idolaters. Now, if you people repent, it is better for you, and if you turn away, bear in mind that you cannot run away from God. And give tidings of a painful torment to the disbelievers. Those Idolaters are an exception from this declaration of acquittal with whom you have made an agreement and who did not dishonour it and did not support anyone against you. So, honour their agreements to the end of their terms. God likes those who abstain from breaking promises. Thus, when the sacred months have passed, kill these Idolaters wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. Then if they repent and are diligent in the prayer, and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. Indeed, God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving. And if any of these Idolaters seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum so that he is able to hear the word of God. Then take him to his place of safety. This is because these are a people who do not know the words of God. (1-6)

How can the responsibility of an agreement with these Idolaters remain with God and His Messenger? – Yes, those with whom you had made an agreement near the Sacred Mosque. So, as long as they abide by it, you also abide by it for them. God befriends those who abstain from breaking promises – how can it remain when if at some instance they overpower you, they neither give regard to any familial ties nor any agreement with you? They want to satisfy you through words of their mouth but their hearts are denying and their majority does not keep their promises. They have accepted a very paltry price in exchange for God’s revelations, and in this way, they have stopped from God’s path. Indeed, very evil is what they are doing. In the matter of a believer, they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise, and they are the ones who commit excesses. So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion. And We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know. (7-11)

And if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion, then fight also these leaders of disbelief. Their words and promises have no significance so that they abstain from their misdeeds. So, how can you not fight such people who break their promises and had the audacity to expel the messenger, and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you. Would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers. Fight them; God will punish them through your hands, humiliate them and grant you dominance, soothe the hearts of one group of the believers and eliminate the sorrow and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. God is All-Knowing, Wise. (12-15)

Do you think that you will be left like this even though God has not as yet separated those among you who waged *jihād* and did not befriend anyone except God, His Messenger and the believers? And whatever you are doing is fully in the knowledge of God. The Idolaters do not have the right to manage the mosques of God even though they are witness to their own disbelief. All their deeds have gone waste and shall abide forever in Hell. Only those people should manage God's mosques who believe in God and the last day, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and do not fear anyone except God. It is hoped that these people shall succeed. Have you equated providing water to the pilgrims and managing the Sacred Mosque to the deeds of those who professed faith in God and the Last Day and who waged *jihād* for the cause of God? The two cannot be equal in the sight of God. God will not guide unjust people. High is the status with God of those who professed faith, migrated and waged *jihād* through their persons and wealth for the cause of God and it is they who shall succeed. Their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours. They shall abide in them forever. Indeed, with God lies a great reward. Believers! Do not befriend your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to belief. And those of you who befriend them shall be ones who are unjust to their own selves. Tell them: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your family, the wealth you have earned, the trade whose loss you fear, and the homes you like are dearer to you than God, His Messenger and *jihād* for His cause, then wait until God delivers His Judgement and God does not guide people who break their promises. Indeed, God has helped you at many instances. And on the day of Ḥunayn also when you were overcome with pride on your large number. Then that large number was of no use to you and the earth despite its vastness became narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away. Ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers and sent down such armies which you did not see and punished the disbelievers and precisely this is the punishment of the disbelievers. Then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (16-27)

Believers! These Idolaters are absolutely impure. So, they must not even come near the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs and if you fear poverty, then if God wills, He shall soon make you rich through His grace. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and All-Wise. (28)

Explanation

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝١ فَسِيْحُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ

مُعۡجِزِی اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخۡزِی الۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ ﴿۲﴾[1]

The word بَرَآءَةٌ means to become absolved from a responsibility. Here it refers to acquittal from agreements and treaties made by the Prophet (sws) with various tribes of the Idolaters after his migration to Madīnah. Some of them were time-barred and some were not. The word الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡن here and wherever else in the Qur'ān it is used as a proper noun refers to the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites or in other words, the Idolaters of Arabia. The reason for acquittal from these agreements is stated in verse 3 ahead. Many tribes had made these agreements but were not abiding by them with sincerity and uprightness. Thus such agreements were declared null and void. Only agreements of those tribes were kept intact who had not broken them and that too to their period of expiry.

In the first verse, the preposition occurs اِلَى after بَرَآءَةٌ. This signifies that the verb "communicate" is encompassed in this construction. In other words, it would mean that the declaration of acquittal be communicated to all the tribes who had broken their agreements. Thus the very next verse has also specified this.

Here, one noteworthy thing is that God has imposed the responsibility of making agreements on Muslims, as is evident from the word عٰهَدۡتُّمۡ because a responsibility taken up by the Prophet (sws) is a responsibility taken up by all Muslims. However, regarding the acquittal, the responsibility of the Muslims is not specified as to what exactly they need to do. This actually shows the intensity of the declaration of acquittal. In other words, when God and His Messenger have declared their acquittal, Muslims should themsleves decide if they want to align themselves with God and His Messenger and thereby testify to having faith in them or if they would like to adopt hypocrisy by giving regard to kinship, brotherhood, family and tribal ties. The reason for adopting this style, as will be shortly stated, was that the hypocrites among the Muslims by that time were not fully detached from their family and tribal relationships. This style makes it evident to them that this decision of God and His Messenger is certain and there is no possibility of any lenience in it. If they want to side by it, they can; otherwise, they can go their own way.

While the first verse was directed at the Muslims, the second directly addresses the Idolaters. This change shows that this threat should not be taken casually. It is a decisive threat of which the results will now manifest themselves with full certainty. It is not that Muslims are addressed and told that they should convey this acquittal to the Idolaters. So, just as in the first verse, the declaration of acquittal was directly made by God, in the second, one the Idolaters are directly addressed by Him and given a respite of four months. After that, no responsibility of agreements that have been

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1. A declaration of acquittal is made from God and His Messenger for these Idolaters with whom you had made agreements. So, walk about now in this land for four months and know that you cannot escape God's grasp and that God shall certainly humiliate the disbelievers.

dishonoured would remain on God and His Messenger: people who have made them wwill be seized at every step.

There could be many expediencies in the respite of 4 months. For example, those who were playing pranks in spite of making agreements could be afforded the opportunity to rethink their ways. Also, Muslims be able to fully devote and prepare themselves for the onslaught they needed to launch later. Moreover, it is also evident from verse 5 ahead that the Sacred Months were approaching in which no military campaign could be carried out.

وَ اَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖۤ اِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْاَكْبَرِ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۙ۬ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ فَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَ
اِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ بَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۙ﴿۳﴾[2]

The word اَذَانٌ here is used literally to connote a declaration. This declaration was supposed to be made at *ḥajj* because it was the only gathering in Arabia in which people from all nooks and corners would gather. Whatever would be announced there would spread all over the country. Until 9 AH, the Idolaters would go for *ḥajj* and hence any declaration made would have reached all those back home too, whether Muslims or not. It is for this reason a general word النَّاس (the people) is used in the verse.

What does *ḥajj-i akbar* mean and which year's *ḥajj* does it refer to are questions which our exegetes have answered. They say that it refers to the *ḥajj* of 9 AH that was offered under the leadership of Abū Bakr (rta). I agree with their opinion because this was the first occasion in which Muslims were able to offer it. Prior to this, they did have a few opportunities but they could only offer *'umrah*, which is also called *ḥajj-i asghar* (mini *ḥajj*). It is in this connection that for the complete *ḥajj* the word *ḥajj-i akbar* is used. As such, Muslims were given glad tidings that until then they were only able to offer the mini *ḥajj*; soon, they will offer the complete *ḥajj*.

It is in this background that people have deduced the period of revelation of this *sūrah* to be 9 AH. However, I am hesitant in accepting this deduction. This is because it is evident from the succeeding verses that these verses and those coming after them were revealed after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah and a little before the conquest of Makkah. However, since this declaration of acquittal was made in 9 AH, people thought that these verses were revealed at this time. The fact is that it was a directive revealed beforehand.

It is difficult for me to determine the period of revelation of these verses. This is because before the departing *ḥajj* of the Prophet (sws), two calendars existed in Arabia. One of them was the lunar one and the other was based on the principle of

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[2] And a general declaration should also be made among people from God and His Messenger on the day of the great *ḥajj* that God and His Messenger are free from obligations to the Idolaters. Now, if you people repent, it is better for you, and if you turn away, bear in mind that you cannot run away from God. And give tidings of a painful torment to the disbelievers.

Nasīy that will be referred to later in the *sūrah*. If someone is able to determine the difference in months between these two, he would be able to determine these four months mentioned in verse 2 as well as the sacred months mentioned in verse 5 ahead. In this research, a guiding point can be that the *ḥajj* offered by the Prophet (sws) in 10 AH was offered exactly on 9th of Dhū al-ḥijjah, keeping in view the lunar calendar and with regard to the principle of Nasīy, it was precisely this date too. It is evident that both calendars agreed here. In the narrative: الزَّمَانُ قد اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يوم خَلَقَ الله السماوات وَالْأَرْض (time has returned to its original format to what it was when the heavens and the earth were created),[3] the Prophet (sws) has pointed to this fact. Though I am not a person with any expertise in mathematics and time measurements, I am satisfied in the light of the words and coherence of the Qur'ān that these verses were revealed a little before the truce of Ḥudaybiyah. Arguments in favour of this will shortly follow.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُّوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤﴾[4]

This is a reference to those Idolaters who were an exception to the declaration of acquittal. These were tribes who had honoured the agreements made with them; they had neither taken any small or big step in violation of these agreements nor helped others directly or indirectly against the Muslims. However, their agreements would only continue until their specified time periods. Once these periods expired, they would be null and void and not renewed. Thus after this declaration the Prophet (sws) never made any agreement with any group of the Idolaters. The reason was that all the agreements with them were made on the basis of the requisites of preaching and conclusive communication of the truth. They were never made for a permanent basis. God's established practice mentioned at several instances in this exegesis is that if a nation towards which a messenger is sent persists in denying him even after the truth has become evident to it, then it is destroyed. This destruction could be through natural disasters or through the swords of the disbelievers. Same was the case of the Idolaters of Arabia. The phase of preaching and conclusive communication of truth was reaching its end. Thus there was no reason to make any agreement with any of their groups.

The تقوى mentioned in the last part of the verse refers to the collective one and not the individual one. Islam requires both these to be fulfilled by its followers. In other words, Muslims must sincerely abide by the agreements they make with other nations and must never go back on their word even in the slightest way. It is such God-fearing people who are friends of God and such people always succeed in this world and the next.

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[3] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1168, (no. 3025).

[4] Those Idolaters are an exception from this declaration of acquittal with whom you have made an agreement and who did not dishonour it and did not support anyone against you. So, honour their agreements to the end of their terms. God likes those who abstain from breaking promises.

فَاِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ وَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوْهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوْا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵﴾[5]

The sacred months are Dhū al-Qa‘dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab. The expression الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ is used as a title for them. No other months can be taken to be implied in any way. They were regarded to be sacred even before the coming of Islam. In fact, they were regarded so since the time of Abraham (sws). I have explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah that they were the months in which *ḥajj* and *‘umrah* were offered and the majority of financial travels of the Arabs were also done by caravans in these months. War was legally prohibited during them and in spite of their militant temperaments, the Arabs honoured this condition. In verse 2, the respite given for four months includes three sacred ones – three because the four sacred months do not occur consecutively. The month of Rajab occurs separately. Because of the principle of Nasīy employed by the Arabs, these months were displaced from their actual position. However if the month of Shawwāl from the prior months was added to them, they become four. The expression “wherever you find them” means that they can even be killed in the bounds of Ḥaram. In other words, they were not to be spared any where. Such an all-embracing nature of onslaught was launched because this was not merely a military step taken against the enemy, it was the manifestation of an established practice of God for the Idolaters of Arabia which manifests itself for people who deny their respective messengers. Details of this practice have been mentioned in Sūrah al-A‘rāf.

This onslaught should not be stopped until they repent from their disbelief and polytheism and observe the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. The latter two form a comprehensive expression of entering in the system of worship and obedience of Islam. This would mean that without accepting Islam, they could neither live as Dhimmīs or Mu‘āhids nor as slave men or women. They only had two options: either accept Islam or face death.

This reason for this special treatment of the Idolaters of Arabia is the same as has been referred to earlier: God had sent a messenger from among them and sent down a book to them in their own language and invited them to the way of Abraham (sws) which they claimed to be adherents of. This messenger warned them consecutively for

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[5] Thus, when the sacred months have passed, kill these Idolaters wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. Then if they repent and are diligent in the prayer, and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. Indeed, God is Merciful, Ever-Forgiving.

23 years and tried to wake them up from their slumber. He came to all their gatherings and knocked at every door. He answered all their objections and cleared all their doubts. He countered all their allegations and their enmities. He even showed them miracles at their demand and showed the truth to conform to their standards. Finally, all good people among them became his companions. Why should the rest be allowed to live after all this profound arrangement of delivering the truth to them if they persisted in its denial? A messenger is the perfect and last means of conclusive communication of the truth. Those who do not wake up by his calls are dead and what is best for the dead is to bury them.

وَاِنْ اَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَاَجِرْهُ حَتّٰى يَسْمَعَ كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اَبْلِغْهُ مَاْمَنَهٗ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٦ [6]

This verse states the last concession given to the Idolaters at the time of the onslaught mentioned earlier. This directive was not any permanent respite given to them. It was only a final chance given to them to weigh the outcome of their denial. If such a person does not accept faith, he will face execution and this temporary asylum would not prove to be of any benefit to him. The chance of any further asylum will also not remain for him.

The last part of the verse states why this concession was given to them: they were an unlettered people who were not conversant with Books of God and His messengers. Thus there was a chance that in spite of this long period of 23 years, something was still amiss in the conclusive communication of the truth. Hence this concession was warranted. It was given even though there was a chance that someone may misuse it.

كَيْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوْا لَكُمْ
فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْا لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝٧ كَيْفَ وَاِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوْا فِيْكُمْ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ؕ يُرْضُوْنَكُمْ
بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَاْبٰى قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۚ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ۝٨ [7]

These verses state the reasons for the declaration of acquittal. Though the address is general, it is directed specially to those Muslims who still had relations and ties of kinship with the Idolaters and as a result of this declaration were in a fix. It had become to everyone as a result of this declaration that the days of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah too were numbered. This treaty had paved the way of intermingling between the Quraysh and the Muslims. The faith of weak Muslims was naturally threatened by this declaration. They had ties with almost every family of the Quraysh and they had expected that this door to meeting them would remain open. They thought that in this way belief and disbelief would live together. This declaration not only ended these expectations once and for all but they also foresaw that the time of waging war with their relatives was drawing near. It is while keeping these people in consideration that the verse goes on to state its intent.

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[6] And if any of these Idolaters seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum so that he is able to hear the word of God. Then take him to his place of safety. This is because these are a people who do not know the words of God.

[7] How can the responsibility of an agreement with these Idolaters remain with God and His Messenger? – Yes, those with whom you had made an agreement near the Sacred Mosque. So, as long as they abide by it, you also abide by it for them. God befriends those who abstain from breaking promises – how can it remain when if at some instance they overpower you, they neither give regard to any familial ties nor any agreement with you? They want to satisfy you through words of their mouth but their hearts are denying and their majority does not keep their promises.

The construction of this verse needs deliberation. It begins with كَيۡفَ يَكُوۡنُ لِلۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ عَهۡدٌ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنۡدَ رَسُوۡلِهٖۤ but before the sentence is completed, an exception is stated as a parenthetical sentence: اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ عٰهَدۡتُّمۡ عِنۡدَ الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسۡتَقَامُوۡا لَكُمۡ فَاسۡتَقِيۡمُوۡا لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ. Once this sentence ends, the previous discourse is now taken up again and begun with the same word كَيۡفَ. It continues until the verse ends.

Relationships are based on two things: social relationships are based on abiding by blood and familial ties and political relationships are based on fulfilling the responsibilities of mutual agreements. The first is referred to by the word اِلًّا. It refers to rights that are based on lineage and common ancestry or kinship and neighbourhood ties. The second is called ذِمَّةً. It refers to the responsibilities imposed on the parties which have made an agreement. The verse consoles Muslims and tells them that they should not be worried if all social ties with the Idolaters are being severed for they were destined to be severed one day. One party cannot alone abide by an agreement. Those of them who hold these relationships dearer should fully understand that if these Idolaters are able to overcome them at any instance, they will neither give regard to blood ties nor agreements. They try to lure and fool Muslims through their sweet talk and superficially show sympathy. Their words betray their intent and their hearts are full of malice for Islam and its followers.

Just as they put up a false show of kinship, they also never honour their agreements and most of them are dishonest in this regard. The word فسق here is used for treason and for breaking of promises. This meaning of the word is commonly found in the Qur'ān. Just as the word تقوى earlier means honouring agreements, the word فسق here means breaking agreements.

The exception clause refers to the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah in my opinion. The arguments in favour of this opinion will become evident ahead but here there a noteworthy proof here too: it is introduced by the words "an agreement near the Sacred Mosque." If any of the agreements made by the Prophet (sws) with the Idolaters can be identified in these words, it can only be this treaty. It is because it was this agreement that was made in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque. By referring to the agreement with these words, it was introduced and in the second instance its extra-ordinary significance was also highlighted: it was an agreement made in the whereabouts of the Holy Mosque, which was the most sacred of places. It may be noted that the Arabs used to make agreements before the idols of their deities and altars in order to create feelings of respect between the parties.

No agreement however can be honoured by one party only. Hence if the Quraysh honour it, Muslims too should abide by it. However, if they break it, Muslims too should break it. This is the requisite of justice also and this is what Islam directs its followers to adhere to.

From the above mentioned verses, three things become evident regarding the agreements made by the Prophet (sws) until then with various groups of the Idolaters.

1. A declaration of acquittal was sounded to those Idolaters who had not honoured their agreements; they were given a respite of four months after which war would be waged against them.

2. The time-barred agreements of those tribes who had abided by them would not be extended once their time expired.

3. Muslims were told to abide by the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as long as the Quraysh would abide by it. It may be noted that this treaty did not have a time-bar and when these verses were revealed the Quraysh were barely being able to abide it. It is thus natural that this question must have arisen in many minds that what would happen to it once four months had passed. This point answers this question. It seems that it was during this time that the Quraysh violated this treaty by helping their ally Banū Bakr against the Banū Khuzā‘ah which was an ally of the Muslims. It was a result of this that the Prophet (sws) attacked Makkah and conquered it.

اِشْتَرَوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِيْ مُؤْمِنٍ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ ؕ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾[8]

This is a further explanation of the declaration of acquittal: these Idolaters do not have the right relationship with their creator and their fellow brethren. These are people who take lead in breaking limits. How can God and His Messenger continue with their agreements with them? They will be treated as Muslim brethren if they fulfil the conditions stated. The last sentence “and We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know” is meant to admonish both the believers and the disbelievers. In other words, those who want to know and understand, for them all directives of God in this regard have been explained and no ambiguity remains. Now, if there are those among Muslims want to separate themselves and strike a deal with the Idolaters, its responsibility rests with them. Similarly, if there are some among the Idolaters have different aspiration. Then they will be responsible for it.

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[8] They have accepted a very paltry price in exchange for God’s revelations, and in this way, they have stopped from God’s path. Indeed, very evil is what they are doing. In the matter of a believer, they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise, and they are the ones who commit excesses. So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion. And We are explaining Our revelations for those who want to know.

وَ اِنۡ نَّكَثُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ عَهۡدِهِمۡ وَ طَعَنُوۡا فِىۡ دِيۡنِكُمۡ فَقَاتِلُوۡۤا اَئِمَّةَ الۡكُفۡرِ ۙ اِنَّهُمۡ لَاۤ اَيۡمَانَ لَهُمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَنۡتَهُوۡنَ ﴿١٢﴾ اَلَا
تُقَاتِلُوۡنَ قَوۡمًا نَّكَثُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ وَ هَمُّوۡا بِاِخۡرَاجِ الرَّسُوۡلِ وَ هُمۡ بَدَءُوۡكُمۡ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ؕ اَتَخۡشَوۡنَهُمۡ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ تَخۡشَوۡهُ اِنۡ
كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَاتِلُوۡهُمۡ يُعَذِّبۡهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ وَ يُخۡزِهِمۡ وَ يَنۡصُرۡكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَ يَشۡفِ صُدُوۡرَ قَوۡمٍ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿١٤﴾ ۙ وَ
يُذۡهِبۡ غَيۡظَ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ وَ يَتُوۡبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿١٥﴾[9]

The first part of verse 12 "and if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion" relates to verse 7 above. It was stated there that as long as the people with whom a treaty was made in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque abide by it, believers too should abide by it. It is now being told that if these Quraysh break it, then the believers should fight these leaders of disbelief. Obviously the term "leaders of disbelief" can only be applied to the Quraysh because all the Arabs followed them in religion. It is they who held the reins of religious leadership. By using this title for the Quraysh, a strong argument of waging war against them was also presented: if they are the leaders of disbelief, then who else but they should the believers fight. It is they from whom poisonous allegations against Islam would originate and it was they who would mock and deride its followers. They were responsible for malicious propaganda against Islam. From them, all these nefarious activities would spread to others.

The sentence "their words and promises have no significance" is a parenthetical one. Thereafter what is stated is connected to the earlier sentence. What is implied is that soon they are bound to break their promise. When they do, the believers must wage war against them so that they desist from their pranks. This implies that they repent and accept Islam, as referred to earlier.

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[9] And if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word and find blame in your religion, then fight also these leaders of disbelief. Their words and promises have no significance so that they abstain from their misdeeds. So, how can you not fight such people who break their promises and had the audacity to expel the messenger, and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you. Would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers. Fight them; God will punish them through your hands, humiliate them and grant you dominance, soothe the hearts of one group of the believers and eliminate the sorrow and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. God is All-Knowing, Wise.

Verse 13 urges the believers to wage war against the Quraysh. Concomitant indications show that this verse was revealed a little later and the words of verse 12 “and if after the agreement they have made, they go back on their word” show that the treaty still existed legally at least. However, the words “so, how can you not fight such people who break their promises” of verse 13 show that they had now violated the treaty. It was done by helping their ally against the ally of the Muslims, as pointed out earlier. Besides this violation, they were also guilty of expelling the messenger from Makkah. This crime is so grave that it entails divine punishment, as is indicated in previous *sūrahs*.

In other words, the implication is that would the Muslims evade waging war against those people who have become worthy of God’s wrath. They tried to expel God’s Messenger from his city, which in itself is a very serious crime. As for the actual reason for his migration, it was at God’s behest and wisdom. The words “and it is they who have taken the initiative in waging war with you” show that they were not just audacious enough to expel the Messenger. The reference here is to the battle of Badr details of which have been mentioned earlier in Sūrah al-Anfāl. These words also show what I have explained earlier: it was the Quraysh who first attacked in the battle of Badr. They had only fashioned the excuse that they were protecting the trade caravan.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that all the above-mentioned crimes were primarily perpetrated by the Quraysh; hence these verses can only relate to them. This also corroborates the period of revelation of this *sūrah* expressed earlier.

The words “would you fear them? God is really worthy of being feared, if you actually are believers” signify a general address; however, their direction of address is towards Muslims weak in faith and the hypocrites. These people were very scared of waging war with the Quraysh, as has been pointed out earlier with details forthcoming. The reason for this related more to their ties with the Quraysh rather than the war itself. They were not prepared at any cost to suddenly break these ties.

The words “fight them; God will punish them through your hands; humiliate them” are meant to encourage Muslims in general and the weak in faith among them in particular: they should not show any weakness in waging war with these leaders of disbelief. It has been explained earlier that God’s established practice about His messengers is that if nations deny their respective messenger, they migrate from them and the nation is necessarily destroyed. If the number of people who profess faith in a messenger is not substantial, then this punishment comes directly from God. If, on the other hand, they are in substantial numbers, then they are tasked with meting out God’s punishment to the disbelievers by their own hands and humiliating them. This humiliation is a special part of that punishment. This is because the real motive of their denial is arrogance and the punishment of arrogance is humiliation.

The words “soothe the hearts of one group of the believers” are meant to express affection to the Muslims who because of being helpless had become targets of the oppression and callous practices of the Quraysh in Makkah. It may be kept in mind that to have anger for the enemies of Islam – to whom the truth had been conclusively delivered – in the heart is totally fine.

The words “and eliminate the sorrow and anger of their hearts and grant whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; God is All-Knowing, Wise” subtly refer to the fact that there were still present among them people who would have the urge to repent and would accept faith. This is a type of glad tiding for Muslims who desired that relatives to accept faith. In “whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; God is All-Knowing, Wise,” there is a reference to God’s established practice regarding repentance and the urge to seek it. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis.

اَمۡ حَسِبۡتُمۡ اَنۡ تُتۡرَكُوۡا وَ لَمَّا يَعۡلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ جٰهَدُوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ وَ لَمۡ يَتَّخِذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ وَ لَا رَسُوۡلِهٖ وَ لَا الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ وَلِيۡجَةً ؕ
وَ اللّٰهُ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿١٦﴾[10]

The word وَلِيۡجَة means “a confidant and a friend.”

It has been pointed out earlier that even though the address is general, it is directed at Muslims who still had ties with the Idolaters. For this reason, this declaration of acquittal had become a great trial. They are told that this trial is God’s established practice. Everyone who lays claim to faith necessarily passes through it. Though God is fully aware of everyone’s deeds, He continues to make them pass through these trials to sift the good from the evil. Hence if they think that merely laying claim to faith would be sufficient, they are gravely mistaken. Time has now come to test them and see who is really sincere in his faith in God and His Messenger and who is bluffing.

Here it needs to be specially noted that faith in God and in His Messenger is mentioned together. This shows that they are indivisible in this regard. He who claims to be sincere to God, should prove that he is sincere to His Messenger and to those who have professed faith in him. If anyone makes others besides the believers to be his friend and confidant, he is not a companion of God and His Messenger as well, however much he may vehemently claim it. This subject is coming up with great clarity in verses 23-24 ahead.

مَا كَانَ لِلۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ اَنۡ يَّعۡمُرُوۡا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ شٰهِدِيۡنَ عَلٰۤى اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ بِالۡكُفۡرِ ؕ اُولٰٓـئِكَ حَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ ۚۖ وَ فِى النَّارِ هُمۡ
خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّمَا يَعۡمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَ اَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَ لَمۡ يَخۡشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى
اُولٰٓـئِكَ اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنُوۡا مِنَ الۡمُهۡتَدِيۡنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اَجَعَلۡتُمۡ سِقَايَةَ الۡحَآجِّ وَ عِمَارَةَ الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ كَمَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَ

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[10] Do you think that you will be left like this even though God has not as yet separated those among you who waged *jihād* and did not befriend anyone except God, His Messenger and the believers? And whatever you are doing is fully in the knowledge of God.

جٰهَدَ فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا یَسۡتَوٗنَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا یَهۡدِی الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿ۘ۱۹﴾ اَلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ هَاجَرُوۡا وَ جٰهَدُوۡا فِیۡ
سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمۡوَالِهِمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۙ اَعۡظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡفَآئِزُوۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ یُبَشِّرُهُمۡ رَبُّهُمۡ بِرَحۡمَةٍ مِّنۡهُ وَ
رِضۡوَانٍ وَّ جَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمۡ فِیۡهَا نَعِیۡمٌ مُّقِیۡمٌ ﴿ۙ۲۱﴾ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اَجۡرٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۲﴾[11]

In the earlier verses, the crimes perpetrated by the Idolaters of Quraysh were pointed out as a result of which the declaration of acquittal was sounded to them. Now, while referring to some of their services for the House of God, it is being explained that these services carry absolutely no weight. The Quraysh certainly do not deserve any lenience because of them. Any service or virtue is only acceptable if it is in line with the real objective. If the real objective is sacrificed, no partial virtue can be its substitute. If the custodian of a mosque turns it into a temple of idols, no credit can be given to him merely on the basis that he has made arrangements of food, water and lodging for the visitors. These arrangements in themselves are acts of virtue. But not as much that because of them his right of turning a mosque into a temple of idols be accepted and he continues as its custodian.

It may be kept in mind that the Quraysh were proud of these services and their other sympathizers too regarded them to be laudable. When war was declared against them, Muslims weak in faith thought that since they were custodians of the House of God, serve its needs and provided water to the pilgrims should deserve some lenience. They should not be treated so harshly as to give them just two options of either accepting faith or facing death. This mentality was not right. On the one hand, it provided an excuse to those who had rejected God's Messenger and on the other hand could have become a source of nurturing a very abhorrent type of hypocrisy in them. For this reason, the Qur'ān corrected this mentality so that a wrong concept of religion does not creep into Muslims.

Consider next verse 18. The verb يَعْمُرُ means to build a house, to populate a land and to inhabit a house and run it." The Idolaters mentioned here in general terms actually refer to the Quraysh who were the custodians of the House of God. By mentioning them as an attribute and not by name, the purpose was to make this directive general and make its cause known too. The expression "mosques of God" means the Sacred Mosque. Thus this has been explained in verse 19 too. Yet by using the plural the purpose is to show that this is not just the case of the Sacred Mosque; no mosque should be managed by the Idolaters. The House of God is the fountainhead and centre of all other mosques and their *qiblah*. If any disorder results in its management, it would mean that the centre of guidance and blessings has become contaminated.

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[11] The Idolaters do not have the right to manage the mosques of God even though they are witness to their own disbelief. All their deeds have gone waste and shall abide forever in Hell. Only those people should manage God's mosques who believe in God and the last day, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and do not fear anyone except God. It is hoped that these people shall succeed. Have you equated providing water to the pilgrims and managing the Sacred Mosque to the deeds of those who professed faith in God and the Last Day and who waged *jihād* for the cause of God? The two cannot be equal in the sight of God. God will not guide unjust people. High is the status with God of those who professed faith, migrated and waged *jihād* through their persons and wealth for the cause of God and it is they who shall succeed. Their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours. They shall abide in them forever. Indeed, with God lies a great reward..

The word disbelief here refers to their polytheism. By calling polytheims as disbelief, this essence of religion is explained that believing in more than one god is like not believing in God. Only monotheistic belief in God is acceptable. There is absolutely no permissibility of believing in God while openly ascribing partners to Him. Regarding the Idolaters of Arabia, it should be kept in mind that it was not that their polytheism was the consequence of any of their beliefs and deeds. They had adopted it as a belief per se. It was an indivisble part of their concept of the divine. Obviously, people who are advocates of this disbelief should remain the custodians of a mosque that was the first of its kind in this world built on the concept of monotheism. It was also the *qiblah* of all mosques of God as well. Being the custodians of the House of God was not a virtue that could plead in their favour. It was, on the contrary, a great sin cleansing which was the foremost obligation of the believers.

The deeds referred to in the verse are the ones which people regarded as virtuous and acts of service. With polytheism, no virtue can be regarded as a virtue in reality. Hence the verse says that all their deeds will go waste and these people shall forever abide in Hell. In the sight of God, only that virtue is acceptable which is done while upholding monotheism. In previous scriptures, a polytheist is compared to an adulteress. Just as all the love and affection of such a woman is useless for her husband, similarly, a person's deeds will have no value if they are done while upholding polytheism.

Regarding the worthy custodians of the House of God, their attributes are spelled out; they were not named even though these attributes obviously applied to Muslims only. The reason for this was that this position of custodianship was not the monopoly of any family. All those who conformed to these attributes were eligible to it. The words "do not fear anyone except God" are meant to refute polytheism. "Fear" here obviously refers to the one that arises by regarding someone other than God to have the power to cause harm or benefit. It is this fear which is polytheism. In other words, here polytheism is refuted by its real motive. I have explained in my treatise "Essence of Polytheism" that the real motive of polytheism is fear.

In the sentence "it is hoped that these people shall succeed" the word "success" refers to reaching the destination. In other words, it is being said that only people who have the afore-mentioned attributes can be expected to reach the destination and be successful. The word "hope" here shows that this no easy a path. There will be hardships and trials in it at every step. Only those people can persevere on this straight path who have the provision of God’s grace with them and who seek help from God only.

In the expression كَمَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ, the governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed just as it is in verse 176 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَن أٰمَنَ بِاللهِ. The addressees are the same people who because of the custodianship of the Sacred Mosque and providing water and services to pilgrims regarded the Quraysh to be distinguished from others and thought they deserved concession.

In the sentence “God will not guide unjust people” the word “unjust” refers to the injustice of polytheism and guidance refers to the guidance regarding the destination. It has been explained earlier that virtues done with polytheism carry no weight before God and all hopes that may be pinned in their outcome shall be dashed to ground.

The expression “high is the status” is not meant for comparison; it is meant for magnification. In other words, people who adhere to faith and migrate and wage *jihād* have a high status before God. Just as it is stated in verse 212 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوَا فَوْقَهُمْ يَومَ القِيامَة (those who adopt piety will be above them on the Day of Judgement), here also the high status of the believers is mentioned regardless of the status of the disbelievers. The words “and it is they who shall succeed” are in contrast to “God will not guide unjust people.” In other words, the disbelievers and the idolaters will meet their painful doom in the Hereafter while the believers will succeed.

The words “their Lord gives glad tidings to them of His mercy, pleasure and orchards in which they shall have eternal favours; they shall abide in them forever; indeed, with God lies a great reward” are a further explanation of “and it is they who shall succeed.”

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْاِيْمَانِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَاَمْوَالُ ۨ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ
كَسَادَهَا وَمَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَجِهَادٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا
يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[12]

Earlier in verse 16, it was stated that God does not like that people who lay claim to faith and also want to have ties of friendship with the Idolaters and disbelievers remain inter-mingled with the believers. Only they have true belief in God who wage war for his cause and not make anyone their confidant or friend in opposition to God and His Messenger. This very topic is now discussed in these verses in a different style and in a very decisive tone before all Muslims so that everyone can choose his path and destination.

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[12] Believers! Do not befriend your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to belief. And those of you who befriend them shall be ones who are unjust to their own selves. Tell them: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your family, the wealth you have earned, the trade whose loss you fear, and the homes you like are dearer to you than God, His Messenger and *jihād* for His cause, then wait until God delivers His Judgement and God does not guide people who break their promises.

Verse 24 forms a final warning. All entities that a person loves are pointed out and it is told that if they are dearer to him than God and His Messenger and war for His cause, then he should wait for God's decision.

The meaning of something being more dear to a person than God and His Messenger means that when two contradictory demands comes before him – one from God and His Messenger and the other from the entities mentioned – a person disregards the first of these demands and prefers the second to it. This means that that thing is dearer to him than God and His Messenger and vice versa. Giving preference to them is the necessary requisite of faith. Without it, no claim to faith has any weight. It is a barometer through which a person can measure his love and faith in everyday life.

There is a subtle psychological sequence that is very evident in the list of things mentioned and held dear by people. Fathers, sons, brothers, wife and family are mentioned first. It is their love and bias which become a source of trial and hindrance for people in the cause of the truth. After that wealth, trade and assets are alluded to. These become attractions primarily with respect to the relations mentioned above and if a person does not have insight, they become a means of trial for him. Wealth is qualified by the word اِقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا. The word اِقْتِرَاف means "to earn." This qualification shows the cherished nature of this merchandise. It is a common principle that the wealth that is earned and nurtured by a person himself is much more dear to him. Similarly, the word merchandise is qualified by the expressionتَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا. It refers to trade that is functioning well and is successful. This is because it is such a trade about which a businessman is always anxious that it should not lose its worth. To circumvent this danger, he takes all sorts of measures until he becomes a literal slave to his trade and worships it like a deity. At such a stage, what is allowed and disallowed to him neither remains of any importance to him nor can he bear the trials of migration, war and abstension from evil for the cause of God. It is stated that each of these is an idol and unless a person is prepared to smash every idol for the cause of God, he cannot fulfil the requisites of faith.

The words "then wait until God delivers His Judgement" sound a very stern warning. A great detail is hidden in this ambiguity. Earlier, the fate of the rejecters of messengers has been mentioned. The same evil fate awaits those who lay claim to faith but who want to ride the two boats of belief and disbelief simultaneously.

Just it was said regarding the Idolaters "God does not guide the unjust" here about this reluctant group the words used are "God does not guide those who break promises." The Arabic words used are وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ. The word فسق means exiting faith. This shows that those who befriend the disbelievers instead of God and His Messenger leave faith in spite of laying claim to it.

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا
رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ اَنْزَلَ جُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَ عَذَّبَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ [13]

The words "indeed, God has helped you at many instances" are addressed to these hesitant people. They should not show reluctance in waging war because the God Who has helped you on many occasions is still with them. Several wars had been fought after migration until the conquest of Makkah. Except for a few, all these had been won by Muslims. The next part of the verse that relates to the battle of Ḥunayn is meant to dispel a doubt that may arise about the aforementioned promise of help. This war that took place in the near past, Muslims had initially been on the losing side. Hence it was essential that its true nature be brought to light: initially because of their large number, Muslims became arrogant and over-confident. The consequence of this was that they faced defeat and ran away from the battle-field. However, later God blessed His Messenger and sincere believers with courage and helped them with armies they could not see. As a result, the disbelievers were routed through their hands.

The implication is that God did give them victory in this battle too once He had admonished them. It is evident from historical reports that the Muslim army consisted of twelve thousand combatants. Before this, they had inflicted great defeats on the disbelievers on many occasions even when they were small in number and under-equipped in weapons. In Ḥunayn, they were in large number for the first time and this made them think that who could defeat them. This wrong self-confidence naturally produced carelessness in them. Many of the combatants became indifferent to God. Earlier in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Anfāl, they had already been warned of this slackness: اِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوْا وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (when you have to fight an army, remain steadfast and remember God in abundance so that you may succeed). Similarly, they paid little attention to order and discipline, obedience and sincerity towards which they were directed in verses 46-47 of that *sūrah*: وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوْا فَتَفْشَلُوْا وَتَذْهَبَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَّرِئَآءَ رِيْحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (and obey God and His Messenger and do not quarrel with one another for as its consequence you will feel defeated and your resolve will weaken; remain steadfast because God is with those

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13. Indeed, God has helped you at many instances. And on the day of Ḥunayn also when you were overcome with pride on your large number. Then that large number was of no use to you and the earth despite its vastness became narrow upon you. Then you turned on your heels and fled away. Ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers and sent down such armies which you did not see and punished the disbelievers and precisely this is the punishment of the disbelievers. Then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

who are steadfast. Be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully). The consequence of this was that just as disobedience to the Prophet (sws) and mutual dispute in the battle of Uḥud had made them taste defeat, in a similar way, vanity in their large number threatened them with danger in the battle of Ḥunayn. Found in this vanity was a reflection of pomposity and show-off which God does not like and from which He has stopped people when they wage war. Such vanity makes a person repose his trust in means and resources instead of God. The fact is that it should be God that he must trust in all circumstances. If this trust weakens, then the largest of numbers and the greatest of resources become immaterial. People who are inflicted with this vanity that no one can defeat them find the earth becoming constricted for them in spite of its vastness: they find no place to escape.

The words "ultimately, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers" point to the fact that whatever happened, happened merely to admonish Muslims. After it, God blessed the believers with courage. The way this happened was that He sent down tranquillity to His Messenger and his sincere followers. Their tranquillity became a source of producing tranquillity in others. It is evident from historical reports recorded by chroniclers that when the Muslim army panicked, only the Prophet (sws) and a few of his sincere companions stood their ground bravely. It was his courage and valour that instilled others with a new spirit and they rallied around him and ended up victorious after defeat through God's help. The disbelievers were meted out the punishment that had become destined for them through the hands of the believers. "Tranquillity" means "courage and determination." The expression "and sent down such armies which you did not see" refers to the armies of angels which accompany the believers everywhere but cannot be observed.

The words "then after this God provides whomsoever He wills the urge to repent; and God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful" show that in spite of all these events, God will give those people the urge to repent who have even the slightest ability left in them. This was a type of glad tiding for people who were worried about their relatives among the disbelievers. This topic has also been discussed in verse 15 earlier. This glad tiding can be seen in very clear words in Sūrah al-Naṣr too.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هٰذَا ۚ وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ
يُغْنِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖٓ اِنْ شَآءَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۸﴾[14]

This is the last directive in the series regarding the declaration of acquittal. Impurity here obviously means the filth of their faith, details of which have been mentioned at other instances. After the conquest of Makkah, the Idolaters no longer controlled the House of God but until 9 AH they were given the concession to come and offer the *ḥajj* in accordance with their own method. They were also allowed to do trading and buy and sell merchandise. However, in the wake of the declaration of acquittal, it was announced at this very *ḥajj* that they could no longer come after that. This was a de fact preparation for the last *ḥajj* in 10 AH so that when the Prophet (sws) himself would offer it, the House would have been cleansed of all traces of disbelief.

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[14] Believers! These Idolaters are absolutely impure. So, they must not even come near the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs and if you fear poverty, then if God wills, He shall soon make you rich through His grace. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and All-Wise.

The word عَيْلَة means “poverty.” Here it refers to financial and trade losses.

It is known that just as the *ḥajj* was a very grand ritual of worship, it also had great significance with regard to trade and business. In this season, merchandise from other cities would reach Makkah and that in Makkah was bought by the touring traders. Such was this significance with regard to trade in the times before the Qur’ān that the Quraysh had fixed the time of *ḥajj* in a particular season by inventing the principle of Nasī so that any change in season may not affect these trade journeys. Now when the Idolaters were stopped from visiting the House of God from the following year, people who belonged to trade and business became worried. They thought that this would very adversely affect their trade and business as a result of which the financial situation of the Muslims would continuously suffer. In order to pacify them, the verse sounds assurance. It is a fact that the promise mentioned in the verse was fulfilled in such a way that not for a single day did trading in Makkah suffer. Moreover, after some time, matters reached the extent that the treasures of Egypt, Syria and Rome travelled on camels to enter the public treasury of the Islamic state. God enriched the Muslims by His grace in such a way that people would not find recipients of their *zakāh* money in the streets of Madīnah.

The last part of the verse shows that this is nevertheless dependent on God’s will and God’s will is dependent on His knowledge and wisdom. Abundance of resources or their constriction is not in the hands of a person. It is in God’s control. Hence, God alone – every act of Whom is based on knowledge and wisdom – should be trusted.

It is evident from this verse that the real importance in Islam is that of spiritual values and faith. Political and economic needs come under it. Economic needs can be sacrificed for the values entailed by faith but not vice versa.

Section II: (29-35)

In the succeeding verses, believers are directed to wage war against the People of the Book, and just as they had been given a clear and definite policy about the Idolaters, they are now given a clear and definite policy against these People of the Book. These Jews and Christians can only live under the Islamic rule as *dhimmīs*. Details of their conspiracies and breach of promises havc been stated in Sūrah al-Anfāl earlier. Here too certain aspects of their beliefs and character are pointed out. Evident from this is that they are a worthless existence and will suffer punishment of their deeds.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ
الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ِۨ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ
وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۚ يُضَاهِـُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ ۚۙ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ اِتَّخَذُوْۤا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اُمِرُوْۤا
اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْۤا اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ
يَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْۤ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى
الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْاَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ
النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۳۴﴾ يَّوْمَ يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوْبُهُمْ وَظُهُوْرُهُمْ ؕ
هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in God or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger, nor follow the religion of truth until they pay the *jizyah* from their hands and are prepared to live a life of submission. (29)

And the Jews regard ‘Uzayr to be the son of God and the Nazarenes say that the Messiah is the son of God. All these are but words of their own mouths. They are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them. The curse of God be on them. From where do they turn away? They have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too even though they had been asked to worship one God only. There is no god except Him. He is exalted above the partners they associate with Him. They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths and God has firmly has decided to complete His light, however much these disbelievers may dislike it. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so that he may make it sovereign over all religions, however much the Idolaters too may detest this. (30-33)

Believers! Most among these scholars and rabbis are those who devour the wealth of people through illegal means and stop [people] from the path of God. And give glad tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God. On the day when this gold and silver of theirs shall be heated in the fire of Hell; then their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding. (34-35)

Explanation

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[15]

The political and religious wrongdoings of the People of the Book have been mentioned in Sūrahs al-Baqarah, A%l-i ‘Imrān, al-Mā’idah and al-Anfāl. These people not only laid claim to faith but also regarded themselves to have sole monopoly of religion and *sharī‘ah*. However, it is evident from these *sūrahs* that they did not believe in God, in the hereafter and in the *sharī‘ah.* The basic condition of faith is that it must fulfil the requisites stipulated by God; yet, their faith was governed by their own desires and religious innovations. By inventing polytheistic beliefs, they had God negated God, regarded themselves to be the favourite and forgiven *ummah* and by allowing the things disallowed by God and His Messenger (sws) were guilty of revoking the *sharī‘ah.* Moreover, they not only rejected the religion sent though His last prophet, as promised, they also went as far as to expend all their strength in opposing it. They continued to indulge in conspiracies against it. Believers were thence ordered to wage war against these miscreants since they did not deserve any lenience. This war should continue until they pay the *jizyah* and agree to live in submission under the Muslim rule.

Consider the expression: حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ.The word يَّدٍ means “hand” but also refers to dominance. In other words, this payment of *jizyah* from them should be as a result of the dominance of the believers. This is a tax imposed on all mature and earning individuals in lieu of security granted to the life and wealth of the People of the Book and to their women and children. Its amount differs and is in accordance with the ability of the individual. There is also a lot of possibility of concession and exemption in it. Details can be looked up in the chapter “Rights of Non-Muslims” in my Book *The Islamic State.*

Here a very distinct thing that can be seen is the difference in treatment between the Idolaters and the People of the Book. About the former, the believers were ordered to execute them until they accepted faith but in the case of the latter, the believers were told to give them security if they agreed to pay the *jizyah*. The reason for this difference has already been indicated earlier: Muḥammad (sws) was born into the Idolaters and it was in their language that God’s Book was revealed to him. He invited them as his addressees in his preaching and it was in accordance with their demands and what they regarded to be good (*ma‘rūf*) and *munkar* (evil) that the truth was conclusively delivered by him to them. After all this elaborate arrangement, there was no possibility of any further respite for them. Thus the Idolaters could not be made Dhimmīs but this chance was given to other non-Muslims.

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[15] Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in God or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger, nor follow the religion of truth until they pay the *jizyah* from their hands and are prepared to live a life of submission.

The directive mentioned in this verse primarily relates to the People of the Book. But in the time of the companions, it was decided that the same treatment would be given to other non-Muslims. Thus the Magians were regarded as similar to the People of the Book and made Dhimmīs. If there is any difference of opinion in this among the jurists, it is of secondary nature. Details of this can be looked up in books of jurisprudence.

It must be specially noted here that the directive relates to Dhimmīs who have been conquered. In other words, they are ones who waged war with an Islamic state and after being defeated were forced into compliance. They are a different category than what our jurists called Mu‘āhids (contractual citizens) or Ahl al-Ṣulḥ (peace-treaty citizens). My afore-mentioned book deals with both these types of citizens. They are ones who out of their own will have desired to live under an Islamic state without any war being waged against them. They will be treated in accordance with the agreement concluded with them. So much so, if they insist that they too should be treated with the same terms and conditions in financial matters as Muslims are, then a government can use its discretion to do so. Breaking such an agreement with them without any logical reason is regarded as a grave offence.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۚ يُضَاهِــُٔوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
مِنْ قَبْلُ ۭ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَمَآ
اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلٰـهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ سُبْحٰنَهٗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[16]

‘Uzayr is mentioned in the Torah as Ezra. It is said that he lived around 5 BC. In the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews had lost the Torah. It is said that it was Ezra who re-compiled the Torah from his memory. It may well be that it was because of this feat of his that the Jews of the Arabian peninsula revered him and this reverence increased to such an extent that they made him the son of God. This

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16. And the Jews regard ‘Uzayr to be the son of God and the Nazarenes say that the Messiah is the son of God. All these are but words of their own mouths. They are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them. The curse of God be on them. From where do they turn away? They have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too even though they had been asked to worship one God only. There is no god except Him. He is exalted above the partners they associate with Him.

would make the Torah compiled by him to have authenticity; and if anyone raised any doubt about it, it could be said that this was the same Torah as the one revealed to Moses (sws) and that after its disappearance it was recompiled by God through His son Ezra. It may be noted that in the idolatrous society of those times such an idea could have become very useful. I was not able to find any details in the literature of the Jews regarding this notion. However, it is apparent from the style of the Qur'ān that it was a very well known fact among the Jews. Had this not been the case, they would have definitely objected against this statement of the Qur'ān. Thus the Qur'ānic wordsm "they have made their scholars and rabbis to be their Lord" were contested by certain quarters and they rejected this claim. The Prophet (sws) gave them an answer that silenced them and it was then that they were satisfied. Similarly, if someone had raised any objection against the claim of the Qur'ān cited here, it would have been stated but no such objection has been cited anywhere.

The discussion on Jesus (sws) being regarded the son of God can be found in the exegesis of Sūrah A%l-'Imrān.

In the earlier verses, it was mentioned that the Jews and Christians do not believe in God and in the hereafter. Now the arguments in favour of this are cited. Both ascribed a son to God. The basic condition of belief in God is that none should have a share in his being, attributes and rights.

The words "all these are but words of their own mouths" imply that ascribing a son to God is a fabrication.

The words "they are saying the same words as the disbelievers before them" imply that these people are blindly following the words of their predecessors. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah A%l-i 'Imrān that in their religious innovations, the Jews and Christians copied the beliefs of their contemporary idolaters but tried to coat them with their own ambiguous words and phrases. For example, in order to popularize Christianity among the Romans and the Greeks, they used content from their beliefs and polytheistic concepts and with the help of words like *ab* (أب) and *ibn* (أبن) used in the Gospels for God and Jesus (sws) respectively authored a whole mythology. The first of these words is used for "father" and "Lord" and the second of them for "son" and "servant." The context clearly shows which of the meanings is implied. But when Hebrew became an extinct language and only translations of the Gospels were extant in the hands of the Christians, only those meanings of these words became the real ones in which they existed in a translation. For example, the Christians of Arabia began taking *ab* (أب) and *ibn* (أبن) to mean "father" and "son" respectively because in Arabic these are the conventional meanings of these words. A similar situation arose at other instances too: the real source of beliefs was not the Book of God; rather the language of its translations.

The Qur'ān has pointed to this very deviance: these people have blindly followed the mythology fabricated by their predecessors and in spite of being reminded of the actual reality did not pay heed.

In Arabic, the expression قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ signifies a curse and اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ connotes regret and sorrow.

In verse 29, it was stated: “nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Messenger.” Now in “they have made their scholars and their rabbis as Lord besides God and Jesus son of Mary too” this claim is substantiated.

The word أحبار is the plural of حبر and it is primarily used for Jewish scholars and رهبان is the plural of راهب and it is generally used for Christian saints and mystics. Making them their Lord is evident from a famous narrative of ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim (rta). He asked the Prophet (sws) that the Jews and Christians do not regard their scholars and saints to be their Lord. At this, the Prophet (sws) remarked that do they not regard what they allow to be allowed and what they disallow to be disallowed. ‘Adī answered in the affirmative. At this, the Prophet (sws) said this precisely is making them their Lord and worshipping them.[17]

In the same context, Jesus son of Mary is also mentioned but he is mentioned separately to distinguish him so that all those alleged things could be pointed to which the Christians had invented regarding Jesus (sws): he was made their Lord; but furthermore, he was regarded to be the son of God; in fact, God per se.

The words “even though they had been asked to worship one God only” imply that they adopted polytheism in spite of the fact that it they had been expressly forbidden from it in the Torah and Gospel. I have cited the necessary information in this regard in the exegesis of A%l-i ‘Imrān.[18]

The word سُبْحٰنَهٗ absolves negative attributes in the noun it qualifies. Found in this word is also a very clear logical argument in favour of monotheism: it is obviously totally illogical to associate an entirely opposite attribute to someone’s established and fundamental attributes. According to this principle, associating any partner to God is against His attribute of divinity because it necessitates a refutation of His universally acknowledged attributes.

يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِــُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ يَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَ لَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ
بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾[19]

Earlier in verses 29-30, it has been mentioned that God sent His true religion to

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17. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 349.

18. *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 113.

19. They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths and God has firmly has decided to complete His light, however much these disbelievers may dislike it. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so that he may make it sovereign over all religions, however much the Idolaters too may detest this.

guide them but they were not prepapred to follow it and would make false excuses to oppose it. They neither have any proof from God for them nor any evidence in their favour that can be drawn from human nature and intellect. In the verses under discussion, this fact is now being made evident in the form of a parable: opposing God's religion through baseless pretexts is like blowing the sun – as if it were a fire ignited in a lamp – through the blows of their mouths. Verse 33 also occurs in Sūrah al-Ṣaff. I will explain some of its aspects there. It may also be noted that the content of this verse has also been explained under verse 192 of Sūrah verse 39 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. I have explained at these instances that the greatest objective of Prophet Muḥammad's advent was to cleanse the land of the Sacred Mosque from every trace of polytheism and disbelief and no other religion except the true religion should remain dominant in this land. As a consequence, this centre of Abraham's basic message – as a result of his supplication – becomes a fountainhead of guidance and light for the whole world. In these verses too it is said that just as the People of the Book will not be able to extinguish the lamp of God with the blows of their mouths, in a similar way, these Idolaters wiill not be able to triumph over the religion of truth. In fact, in spite of all their efforts, it will remain dominant on every religion of this land.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْاَحْبَارِ وَ الرُّهْبَانِ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ
الَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَ الْفِضَّةَ وَ لَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۳۴﴾ يَّوْمَ يُحْمٰى عَلَيْهَا فِيْ نَارِ
جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَ جُنُوْبُهُمْ وَ ظُهُوْرُهُمْ ؕ هٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[20]

Earlier, those wrongdoings the People of the Book were guilty of with regard to God were mentioned. Now those wrongdoing are being stated which they committed against their fellow human beings so that it becomes fully clear that their existence has no benefit now and they are merely a burden on the face of God's earth. They deserve that their wretched presence be done away with. Here a special aspect must also be kept in mind that instead of the character of the masses, the character of their scholars and sages has been exposed. The purpose is to show that if their scholars have such a character, then what to speak of their masses and how can they be reformed. Only the scholars and sages could have reformed them. When they have become so greedy and slaves to their wealth, who will reform the masses.

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[20] Believers! Most among these scholars and rabbis are those who devour the wealth of people through illegal means and stop [people] from the path of God. And give glad tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God. On the day when this gold and silver of theirs shall be heated in the fire of Hell; then their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding.

Amongst the Jews, all the positions related to religious and temporal judicial forums were held by their scholars. As for the priests of the Christians, they even had the authority to grant documents of salvation to the people. Moreover, they had regarded their ownselves to be the recipients of charity disbursed by the masses. For this reason, gathering and hoarding wealth through illegal means were open for them in abundance. They had even taken to interest-based lending. It is also indicated in the Qur'ān that they used to relish obtaining money from non-Israelites through wrong means. Jesus (sws) condemned them in very harsh words on their greediness. Seeing the ill-ways of the administration of the temple, he is reported to have remarked that they had made the House of his father a "a den of robbers" (Matthew, 21:13). He also said: "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matthew, 23:23).

The words "stop [people] from the path of God" refer to the fact that these scholars had adopted the very opposite way in discharging their duties: the obligation God had imposed on them was to show the way of God to people. On the contrary, they were using all their abilities to stop people from this way and instead of become guides for people, they had become robbers in the words of Jesus (sws). These ill-ways of the scholars of Jews in stopping people from the path of God have been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Though the words "and give glad tidings of a painful torment to those who are hoarding up gold and silver and do not spend it in the cause of God" address those who were greedy and had become slaves to their wealth, which have been mentioned earlier, but their style is general and relates to all those who hoard wealth. The clear purpose of this teaching is that wealth is not meant for accumulation; it is meant for spending in the way of God, which means spending it in all those heads which are mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and which can be directly or indirectly subsumed under them. It must be noted that it is not said that those who do not pay *zakāh* in spite of being eligible to pay it; what is on the contrary said is that those who hoard wealth and do not spend it in the way of God will face the warning mentioned. Spending in the way of God (*infāq fī sabīllillāh*) is different from giving *zakāh*. God demands two things from every person who has wealth: the first is to pay *zakāh* and the second is to spend in the way of God instead of accumulating it. The first of these demands is legal and an Islamic government, if needed, can even forcibly collect *zakāh* from each of its citizens. The second of these is *infāq fī sabīllillāh*; however, it cannot be forcibly exacted. It has been left to the person who can afford such spending. It is this voluntary spending on which depends the real status of a person before God. As has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is this spending which strengthens a person's faith and it is this spending which blesses a person with the treasure of wisdom. It also enhances the radiance of the heart. If a person has heaps of wealth and he is indifferent to the needs of the orphans among his neighbours, the poor and the indigent and also does not care about the requirements of religion, its education and war for the cause of God, he cannot absolve himself from accountability before God even if he pays *zakāh*, which is what is legally due from him. Further ahead in this *sūrah*, the Hypocrites are mentioned who would regard spending on others to be a penalty. The Qur'ān has called this worship of wealth to be a proof of their hypocrisy and very sternly warned them. Obviously, this warning was not sounded to them for not paying *zakāh*; they would nevertheless pay it with reluctance otherwise they would have been sought and killed. Their real crime was that they would refrain from spending for *jihād* in spite of being affluent and this attitude is from among the signs of hypocrisy per se; in fact, in some circumstances, it becomes a very filthy sort of hypocrisy which cannot exist with faith. Some people present the example of the affluence of the companions and say that accumulating wealth is fine if a person pays *zakāh*. However, this opinion is not true. Companions who were affluent were so because the nature of their wealth was business and trade related. To invest money in trade to increase it cannot be called hoarding. It is called earning wealth and this not something condemned in Islam. It is something very praiseworthy. If a person invests in permissible trade ventures, earns money through permissible means and while abstaining from stinginess and overspending spends on his needs, pays the *zakāh* due on him and voluntarily spends his wealth openly and secretly, then he is rendering true service to an Islamic society and will be someone whose deeds will be accepted by God in the hereafter. Among the companions, 'Uthmān (rta) was one such affluent person and other companions too were of similar sort. Who can deny the benefits reaped by Muslims through the wealth of 'Uthmān? Then how can it be thought that in the last years of his life this generous person who was blessed with wealth would have taken to accumulating wealth against his general practice and habit?

However, it must be clearly remembered that this spending in the way of God cannot be enforced on a person as *zakāh*. It is to be done voluntarily by a person of wealth. It is among the duties of a government that it does not allow the ailment of hoarding wealth spread in the society. It should use all its means to urge and exhort people to spend in the way of God. The most effective way to achieve this is that the ruling class of the society should keep their standard of living in check. They should be adhere to moderation and urge others too to adopt it. In fact, they should strongly discourage trends that induce people to outdo one another in raising these standards.

Consider now the last part of the verse "their foreheads, sides, and backs will be branded with it. It is this that you had hoarded. So, taste then what you have been hoarding." The race to hoard wealth is based on two factors: first is to be more prominent among one's contemporaries and second is to lead a luxurious life.

Section III: (36-37)

In the previous verses, the believers were directed to wage war against the Idolaters and the People of the Book. Now in the succeeding two verses, it is being directed that the sanctity of the four sacred months should be maintained. It is in fact a further emphasis of the directive mentioned in verse 5 which says that only when the sacred months are over should war be waged. After that, the innovation of *nasīy* is also reformed which the Idolaters of Arabia had derived from the People of the Book. It has already been mentioned earlier that the Idolaters of Arabia had made their calendar on the basis of the principle of *kabīsah* keeping in view their trade benefits. This had resulted in the sacred months falling in the same season each year. This innovation had displaced the lunar months from their actual place. Since lunar months were the ones that were ordained by God and since the time of Abraham (sws), it was they who had been in prescribed for offering *ḥajj* and *‘umrah*, it became essential that this innovation be reformed once the revival of the religion of Abraham (sws) was entering its last phase. This would restore the sacred months and the rituals of *ḥajj* to their original place. Thus the last *ḥajj* of the Prophet (sws) was offered exactly on the date which was the correct one with regard to the lunar calendar.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُوْرِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِیْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ یَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ مِنْهَاۤ اَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
الدِّیْنُ الْقَیِّمُ ۙ۬ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوْا فِیْهِنَّ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِیْنَ كَآفَّةً كَمَا یُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ كَآفَّةً ؕ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ
الْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ اِنَّمَا النَّسِیْٓءُ زِیَادَةٌ فِی الْكُفْرِ یُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا یُحِلُّوْنَهٗ عَامًا وَّیُحَرِّمُوْنَهٗ عَامًا لِّیُوَاطِـُٔوْا عِدَّةَ
مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ فَیُحِلُّوْا مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ زُیِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ اَعْمَالِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا یَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِیْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

Indeed in God’s record, God has ordained the months twelve in number from the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true way. Therefore, do not be unjust to your selves. And fight while being united against the Idolaters the way they fight against you while being united. And bear in mind that God is with those who fear Him. This *nasīy* is an addition to disbelief through which the disbelievers are led into error. In some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed. Their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers. (36-37)

Explanation

اِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُوْرِ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِیْ کِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ یَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْهَاۤ اَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّیْنُ
الْقَیِّمُ ۙ۬ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوْا فِیْهِنَّ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَ قَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِیْنَ كَآفَّةً كَمَا یُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ كَآفَّةً ؕ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾[21]

First, as a prelude, the importance of lunar months is explained: they are the ones ordained by God for this universe because He has made a system to determine them from within the universe. Such is this system that it affords a very accessible way for even the least learned to determine it. Thus in verse 5 of Sūrah Yūnus, it is stated: “it is He who made the sun radiant and the moon a light and ordained phases for it so that you are able to find the number of years and their calculation from it.” This is the divine calendar ordained by God and has been in force since the start of creation. This is a reference to the fact that there is no such evidence from the system of the universe that can be cited for man made calendars. This divine calendar becomes evident every month on the horizon and keeps a count of days, months and years by the waxing and waning of the moon. Never does any error creep into it.

“God’s record” refers to the book in which the directives and laws regarding this universe are written. Since these twelve months from which four are sacred are also recorded in this book, any effort to the change them would amount to disrupting the calendar ordained by God, which would be totally against His will.

The words “this is the true way” point to the fact that this calendar is the right way. Just as Islam is the true way because the signs found in this world bear witness to it, in a similar way, this calendar too is the real calendar because it is ratified by a sign found in the world: the moon. It may be kept in mind that just as agriculture is dependent on time and climate, religious issues also are dependent on time, days and years. Just as any cultivation done in the wrong season will produce no results, similarly, the prayer, the fast and the *ḥajj* offered at the wrong time will be fruitless. For this reason, it became essential that the calendar on which worship rituals are dependent should also be given religious status. Thus, it is called “the true way” because it is also part of the religion and an important one too. Effecting any change in it is tantamount to effecting interpolation in religion.[22]

The words “therefore, do not be unjust to your selves” imply that the believers should not violate the sanctity of these months nor change them. If they initiate war in these months, they would not be harming God in any way; they will only be unjust to their own selves. This is because if God regarded them to be sacred, it was for their benefit. Thus if they change them, they will only harm their own selves since they will deprive themselves of the blessings God has placed within them.

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[21] Indeed in God’s record, God has ordained the months twelve in number from the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true way. Therefore, do not be unjust to your selves. And fight while being united against the Idolaters the way they fight against you while being united. And bear in mind that God is with those who fear Him.

[22] The question whether Muslims can use any other calendar than the lunar one is beyond the scope of our discussion. My submission is that in religious matters, only the lunar calendar must be followed and cannot be changed in any way.

Fighting them while being united refers to the fact that any sympathy, familial or tribal relationship with the disbelievers or any political or economic benefit should not be a cause of any discrimination in waging war with some. Regardless of all such ties and benefits, all Idolaters should be fought with without any exception. This is because they too have adopted the same scheme against the believers. They are the collective enemies of the believers. In verse ten, it was stated: "they neither have regard for familial ties nor any promise." Thus the believers should wage war in a united way and kill the disbelievers wherever they find them; however, they must give due regard to the sacred months. They must not initiate war in these months; but if attacked they can wage a defensive war, as has been stated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Believers must keep in mind that God is only with those who abide by the limits prescribed by Him. It must be kept in mind that in the Arabia also, families would have strong ties with each other on the basis of treaties and being political allies. The resultant obligations were given great importance.

After the general declaration of acquittal stated at the beginning of the *sūrah*, here the believers are directed that any such connection with Idolaters must not hamper them in waging war. They should declare war against all the Idolaters without any exception.

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيٓءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِى الْكُفْرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُحِلُّوْنَهٗ عَامًا وَّ يُحَرِّمُوْنَهٗ عَامًا لِّيُوَاطِـُٔوْا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ فَيُحِلُّوْا
مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ اَعْمَالِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[23]

The word نساء means "to defer something" or "to push it back." From it, is the expression نسأالبعير دفعه عن الحوض which means that the camel was pushed back from reaching the fountain. نسأالرعی فی ظمْ الابل means "the shepherd pushed backed the camels from drinking water for some days." From this participle, the noun نسیء was made. In the parlance of Arab *jāhiliyyah*, it refers to that month which is deferred by adding a few days to it. The solar calendar has approximately eleven days more than the lunar one. In order to compensate this reduction in the lunar calendar, the Arabs would add days commensurate to this reduction. The practical way adopted for this was that after every eight years, three months were added. Thus at the end of every second or third

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23. This *nasīy* is an addition to disbelief through which the disbelievers are led into error. In some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed. Their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers.

year, one month would be that of *kabīsah*. In this way, according to their thinking, they would keep intact the sanctity of the lunar month, in particular the sacred months and also at the same time transformed it in to a solar month to suit their trade benefits.

As pointed out, the Arabs did this to keep intact the count of the sacred months, which was a religious requirement and in this way their trade expediencies were also taken care of. However, the Qur'ān did not accept this religiosity of theirs and called it an addition in disbelief. This led to their further diversion from the straight path and from the way of Abraham (sws).

The words "in some year, they make it allowed and in some year make it forbidden so that by completing the count of the months regarded sacred by God they make what is forbidden by Him as allowed" point to the reason why Nasīy has been regarded as an addition in disbelief. It should be kept in mind that this change of the lunar calendar into the solar one would result in the *ḥajj* and the sacred months being displaced from their original time by thirty three years. God made the last *ḥajj* of the Prophet (sws) happen on exactly the same time as it should originally have happened before the tampering with the lunar calendar. Thus the Prophet (sws) proclaimed: قد اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يوم خَلَقَ الله السماوات وَالْأَرْضَ (time after its passage has returned to its original position – the one it had when God had created the heavens and the earth).[24] So at that very day, he declared that the lunar calendar ordained by God shall be imposed and the Nasīy principle stood revoked. This was in exact compliance to verse 36 above.

The words "their foul deeds have been made fair to them and God He shall not guide the disbelievers" imply that by joining belief and disbelief through completing the count of the sacred months, this show put up by them is not religiosity at all. Such religiosity will be fruitless on the Day of Judgement.

Section IV: (38-42)

After declaring war with the Idolaters and the People of the Book in the previous sections, the discourse now shifts towards the Hypocrites and continues until the very end of the *sūrah*. It is as if after open enemies of the Muslims, their hidden ones are addressed. Every one of their weaknesses as well as their pranks is exposed in detail so that believers fully become aware of them and are not deceived. Prior to this, whatever criticism was done on the Hypocrites was couched in soft words. However, in this *sūrah* just as the final verdict was declared against the Idolaters and the People of the Book, in a similar way, an unchallengeable verdict was pronounced against the Hypocrites. The purpose was that those among them who have any potentional of repenting and reforming themselves are provided with this opportunity and they become healthy individuals of the Islamic society. On other hand, those who are spiritually dead should get included in the rotten mass of people wiping out which has been destined by God.

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[24] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1168, (no. 3025).

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَرَضِيْتُمْ بِالْحَيٰوةِ
الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ اِلَّا تَنْفِرُوْا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ
وَّيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِلَّا تَنْصُرُوْهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللّٰهُ
اِذْ اَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ اِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ لِصَاحِبِهٖ لَا تَحْزَنْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا ۚ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلَيْهِ وَاَيَّدَهٗ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلٰى ؕ وَكَلِمَةُ اللّٰهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ؕ وَ
اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ اِنْفِرُوْا خِفَافًا وَّثِقَالًا وَّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيْبًا وَّسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَّاتَّبَعُوْكَ وَلٰكِنْۢ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ؕ وَ
سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ ۚ يُهْلِكُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Believers! What is the matter with you that when it is said to you: “Go out to wage *jihād* for the cause of God,” you fall flat to the ground? Are you content with the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter? In contrast to the Hereafter, the life of this world is very meagre. If you do not get up, then God will give you a painful punishment and bring some other nation in your place and you will not be able to harm Him the least. And God has power over everything. If you do not help the Prophet, it does not matter. God helped him at the time when the disbelievers turned him out such that he was only the second of the two when both of them were in the cave when he was telling his companion: “Grieve not; God is with us.” So, God sent down His tranquillity on him and helped him with armies you could not see and He brought down the word of the disbelievers and only the word of God prevailed. And God is Powerful; He is very Wise. (38-40)

Go out with light provisions and with heavy ones too, and wage *jihād* for the cause of God with your persons and wealth. This is better for you if you know. Had the gain been immediate and the journey easy, these people would have definitely followed you; but this destination became difficult for them. And now they will swear oaths by God: “If we could have gone out, we definitely would have gone out with you.” They are destroying themselves and God knows that they are absolute liars. (41-42)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَرَضِيْتُمْ بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ
الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿۳۸﴾[25]

The word نفار means to go out for war or for some other similar purpose. The words تَثَاقَل and اِثَّاقَل are the same. They mean "to feel the burden of the something." The addition of اِلَى الْاَرْضِ (to the ground) picturizes the whole scene. Instead of getting up as commanded, they fall to the ground like a heavy load.

Though the words of the verse are general, yet they are directed to the hypocrites who were evading *jihād* because of laziness and vested interests.

The words "are you content with the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter? in contrast to the Hereafter, the life of this world is very meagre?" depict the real reason in the form of a question. They want immediate gains of this world and ignore the world to come.

اِلَّا تَنْفِرُوْا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ وَّيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۳۹﴾[26]

This verse sounds a threat to the hypocrites for not being prepared to go out for war. In verse 38 of Sūrah Muḥammad, it is similarly stated: وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْٓا اَمْثَالَكُمْ.[27]

The sentence "and God has power over everything" simultaneously points to several facts: firstly, God has the power to punish them; secondly, God has the power to replace them with others; thirdly, God has the power to accomplish all His schemes and is not dependent on anyone in this regard.

اِلَّا تَنْصُرُوْهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللّٰهُ اِذْ اَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ اِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ لِصَاحِبِهٖ لَا تَحْزَنْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا ۚ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلَيْهِ وَاَيَّدَهٗ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلٰى ؕ وَكَلِمَةُ اللّٰهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۴۰﴾[28]

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[25] Believers! What is the matter with you that when it is said to you: "Go out to wage *jihād* for the cause of God," you fall flat to the ground? Are you content with the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter? In contrast to the Hereafter, the life of this world is very meagre.

[26] If you do not get up, then God will give you a painful punishment and bring some other nation in your place and you will not be able to harm Him the least. And God has power over everything.

[27] And if you turn away, He will replace you by others; then they shall not be like yourselves.

[28] If you do not help the Prophet, it does not matter. God helped him at the time when the disbelievers turned him out such that he was only the second of the two when both of them were in the cave when he was telling his companion: "Grieve not; God is with us." So, God sent down His tranquillity on him and helped him with armies you could not see and He brought down the word of the disbelievers and only the word of God prevailed. And God is Powerful; He is very Wise.

Concomitant indications found ahead show that the antecedent of the accusative pronoun in تَنۡصُرُوۡهُ is the Prophet (sws). This is because it was he who had invited people to wage war as God's envoy. The hypocrites were addressed in the previous verse while being indifferent to them. The reasons for this indifference are explained in this verse: the objective of making God's name prevail is the sole one for which God's Messenger has taken a step; if they do not support him, they should not think that this task would not be achieved. The God Who has helped His Messenger at every step during his migration is still there to help him.

The disbelievers had turned out the Prophet (sws) from Makkah and just one companion (Abū Bakr (rta)) could accompany him in his journey of migration. All the Quraysh was thirsty for his blood but he fooled them to come out of Makkah and none could harm him. Both of them had sought refuge in a cave and the enemies in their pursuit reached the opening of the cave. Abū Bakr (rta) feared that they would be soon caught by them and this would be their end. In this situation, the Prophet (sws) assured him as the verse says and God also sent down His tranquillity on them. They are then reminded of God's invisible forces that helped them in other battles. They notched up victory after victory and the God's religion prevailed. If He helped them in the past through such majestic means, how can He be dependent on the help of the hypocrites now? He is Mighty and Powerful. Thus none can stop Him in what He wants to do and every act of His has such wisdom that none can attain it.

اِنۡفِرُوۡا خِفَافًا وَّثِقَالًا وَّجَاهِدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِكُمۡ وَاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٌ لَّكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[29]

The word خِفَاف is the plural of خفيف and ثِقَال is the plural of ثقيل. Here خفيف is used for a person who because of straitened circumstances does not have provisions and ammunition for war. ثقيل on the other hand, refers to someone who has all the provisions and ammunition for war.

What is implied is that any scarcity in weaponry should not be an excuse to not go out for war. Whatever is available should be availed for this purpose and they should be prepared to fight with their persons and their wealth. The blessings this would entail would be limitless and if they desist from going out, then the loss incurred would also be limitless too.

لَوۡ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيۡبًا وَّسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَّاتَّبَعُوۡكَ وَلٰكِنۡۢ بَعُدَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ؕ وَسَيَحۡلِفُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَوِ اسۡتَطَعۡنَا لَخَرَجۡنَا

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[29] Go out with light provisions and with heavy ones too, and wage *jihād* for the cause of God with your persons and wealth. This is better for you if you know.

مَعَكُمْ ۚ يُهْلِكُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾[30]

The word شُقَّة refers to the distance a traveller covers. The words “but this destination became difficult for them” show that the hypocrites are being warned on the weaknesses they showed in the battle of Tabūk. In this battle, the distance that had to be covered was of a fair amount and the hot weather was also unfavourable. It took place in 9 AH when the crops were ready for harvest. Moreover, the enemy was in large numbers. Hence, the weaknesses of the hypocrites were totally exposed. They fabricated lame and false excuses including a lack of adequate resources to wage war. Though the Prophet (sws) was fully aware of the nature of their excuses, he ignored them out of magnanimity. But God had different plans: He exposed them so that those who could mend their affairs could do so; otherwise, Muslims at least would be able to recognize their machinations. If they knew that they could gain spoils of war without much effort in travel, they would have definitely gone out with the Muslims. However, they were not prepared to face the pangs of the hard journey ahead. Instead of confessing their weakness, they readily swore oaths to convince Muslims that it was not cowardice that was stopping them but their lack of provisions. The words “they are destroying themselves” imply that through their false excuses, they think that they are saving themselves; the fact is that they are destroying themselves. This is because evading *jihād* when a Muslim ruler makes a general appeal to participate in it entails severe punishment. I have explained under verse 195 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that running away from the obligations of God is running towards destruction.

Section V: (42-60)

In the succeeding verses, first the Prophet (sws) is very affectionately chided on his graciousness for accepting the lame excuses fabricated by the hypocrites. Thereafter a yardstick of discriminating sincere believers from the hypocrites is placed before him: true and strong believers will never present excuses of not waging *jihād* before him. Only they present such excuses who have hypocrisy hidden in their hearts and because of this hypocrisy God has deprived them of this blessed obligation.

After this, assurance is sounded to the believers that if the hypocrites did not go out for *jihād*, it was in their favour because in that case they would have spread mischief among the believers. Such instances happened in the past too. Though they are

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30. Had the gain been immediate and the journey easy, these people would have definitely followed you; but this destination became difficult for them. And now they will swear oaths by God: “If we could have gone out, we definitely would have gone out with you.” They are destroying themselves and God knows that they are absolute liars.

apparently with the believers, they are working as agents of someone else.

After that some other hypocrites are referred to who had also put up a show of religiosity in fabricating their excuses. They contended that they were not participating in *jihād* to protect their religion and morals. They are reprimanded on their false religiosity and the malice they have for Islam and Muslims is fully exposed.

Next, the hypocrites are warned that none of their spending for the cause of God is acceptable to Him because they are devoid of faith. They spend for His cause under compulsion and their prayer is just a display of show off. At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is directed to not give them any importance. Their wealth will not be of any use for religion. It will become a source of destruction for them both in this world and in the next.

The verses then say that if these hypocrites are still clinging to Muslims it is either because of fear or greed. Since they have no escape route, they have sought refuge in the folds of Islam. Such is the extent of their greed that they blame the Prophet (sws) for not giving them in full from the heads of charity. At the same time, the heads of charity are also explained so that no one should enter the folds of Islam merely because of this greed.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Explanation

عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْكَ ۚ لِمَ اَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَ تَعْلَمَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَا يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ
الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ اِنَّمَا
يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ ارْتَابَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْ رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَ لَوْ
اَرَادُوا الْخُرُوْجَ لَاَعَدُّوْا لَهٗ عُدَّةً وَّ لٰكِنْ كَرِهَ اللّٰهُ انْۢبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَ قِيْلَ اقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَوْ
خَرَجُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا زَادُوْكُمْ اِلَّا خَبَالًا وَّ لَاۡاَوْضَعُوْا خِلٰلَكُمْ يَبْغُوْنَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ ۚ وَ فِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ قَلَّبُوْا لَكَ الْاُمُوْرَ حَتّٰى جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَ ظَهَرَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَ
هُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ ائْذَنْ لِّيْ وَ لَا تَفْتِنِّيْ ؕ اَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوْا ؕ وَ اِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌۢ
بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيْبَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا قَدْ اَخَذْنَاۤ اَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ
يَتَوَلَّوْا وَّ هُمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قُلْ لَّنْ يُّصِيْبَنَاۤ اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوْلٰىنَا ۚ وَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ؕ وَ نَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمُ اللّٰهُ
بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖۤ اَوْ بِاَيْدِيْنَا ۫ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْۤا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّتَرَبِّصُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قُلْ اَنْفِقُوْا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا لَّنْ يُّتَقَبَّلَ

مِنْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَ مَا مَنَعَهُمْ اَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقٰتُهُمْ اِلَّاۤ اَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ
بِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ اِلَّا وَ هُمْ كُسَالٰى وَ لَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ اِلَّا وَ هُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَ لَاۤ
اَوْلَادُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ تَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَ يَحْلِفُوْنَ
بِاللّٰهِ اِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ ؕ وَ مَا هُمْ مِّنْكُمْ وَ لٰكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّفْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُوْنَ مَلْجَاً اَوْ مَغٰرٰتٍ اَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا
اِلَيْهِ وَ هُمْ يَجْمَحُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّلْمِزُكَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ ۚ فَاِنْ اُعْطُوْا مِنْهَا رَضُوْا وَ اِنْ لَّمْ يُعْطَوْا مِنْهَاۤ اِذَا
هُمْ يَسْخَطُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَ لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ رَضُوْا مَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ ۙ وَ قَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ سَيُؤْتِيْنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَ
رَسُوْلُهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ رٰغِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ اِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ
وَ فِى الرِّقَابِ وَ الْغٰرِمِيْنَ وَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ ابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also. Those who truly believe in God and the Hereafter shall never come to you to seek exemption that they be excused to wage *jihād* with their persons and wealth. God is fully aware of His pious servants. Only those come to seek exemption who do not believe in God and the Hereafter and whose hearts are afflicted with doubts and their doubts have made them reluctant. And if they had wanted to go out, they could have made some preparation but God did not like their getting up; so made them sit and said: “Keep sitting with those who sit.” (43-46)

If these people had joined you in your march, they would have only caused turmoil in you and all their efforts among you are to incite mischief. And there are those among you who do listen to them and God is fully aware of these unjust people. They have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents until against their will the truth appeared and God’s directive manifested itself. (47-48)

And there are those among them also who say: “Grant me exemption and do not put me through a trial.” – Listen up! They are already in a trial. And indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers. And if some success befalls you, they are grieved, and if some calamity befalls you, they say: “Good that this happened. We had already secured ourselves,” and they return joyous. Tell them: Only that shall befall us what God has ordained for us. He is our guardian and for the believers, it is only befitting that He alone should be trusted. Tell them: You await for us nothing except one out of two good things. But what we await for you is that either God will send His torment to you from Himself or through our hands. So wait, we also are among those who wait with you. (49-52)

Tell them: Whether you spend willingly or unwillingly, none of your spending will be accepted. You are a people who break promises. If their spending is not worth accepting, then the only reason is that they have shown disbelief in God and His Messenger. And if they come for prayer, it is because of compulsion and if they spend, they spend willingly. So, do not give any importance to their wealth and children. God only desires to punish them in the life of this world through them, and they lose their lives in the state of disbelief. (53-55)

And they repeatedly swear oaths by God to assure you that they are from among you even though they are not from among you. They are in fact cowards. Had they found an abode, a cave or a place to sit in, they would have broken their string and run frantically towards it. And among them are those also who censure you in the distribution of charity. If they receive from it, they remain happy and if they do not, they become furious. And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: "God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God." Charity in is only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are in charge of its set-up, and for those whose hearts are to be assured. Moreover, for the release of necks and to help those who have been inflicted with losses and for the way of God and for the welfare of the wayfarers. This is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise. (56-60)

Explanation

عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْكَ ۚ لِمَ اَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[31]

To ignore and forgive is an essential consequence of magnanimity. Just as the Prophet (sws) was an embodiment of all lofty human traits, he was also extremely magnanimous. The hypocrites would try to take undue advantage of this. They would make false excuses to evade religious obligations in particular, *jihād*. The Prophet (sws) was fully aware of the nature of these excuses but would ignore them and accept their excuses because of his magnanimous nature, as has just been pointed out. By taking advantage of this, the hypocrites would get another opportunity to hide their hypocrisy and this would continue to strengthen their power of deception. For this reason, the Almighty affectionately admonished the Prophet (sws). This admonishment begins with the words: "may God forgive you" to clarify that the purpose was not to actually scold him but to direct his attention to the wrong advantage the hypocrites would take of his gracious behaviour. He is told that in spite of knowing that their excuses are baseless, he gives them exemption; this makes them cling to their mischief even more strongly and succeed in their wickedness; had he not

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31. May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also.

accepted their excuses, they would have been exposed and the good and the bad elements among them would have been exposed; thus those who would have chosen to stay back in their houses would have been identified as hypocrites; but now they hide behind the Prophet's redemption.

لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾ اِنَّمَا
يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ ارْتَابَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْ رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾[32]

These verses specify a prominent distinction between the hypocrites and the sincere believers who truly and strongly believe in God and the hereafter. God knows fully well His pious servants. Only those come to the Prophet (sws) to claim exemption who do not truly believe in God and in the hereafter and are inflicted with the ailment of doubt. As a result of this, they outwardly say that they are with God and His Prophet (sws) but their hearts are full of hesitancy. It may be kept in mind that those under discussion here the ones who would regard themselves to be excused because of false excuses but were not able to convince others of their excuses. This is because things that can become an excuse from *jīhad* are not ones that can remain hidden. The excuse of people who are really handicapped in this regard is very evident and obvious. Every one regards it to be so. Thus details of the actual handicapped are provided ahead in this very *sūrah*:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَآءِ وَ لَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى وَ لَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ حَرَجٌ اِذَا نَصَحُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ مَا
عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۙ وَّ لَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا مَاۤ اَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَاۤ اَجِدُ مَاۤ اَحْمِلُكُمْ
عَلَيْهِ ۪ تَوَلَّوْا وَّ اَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا يَجِدُوْا مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ (٩: ٩١-٩٢)

> There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: "I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance," they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. (9:91-92)

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32. Those who truly believe in God and the Hereafter shall never come to you to seek exemption that they be excused to wage *jihād* with their persons and wealth. God is fully aware of His pious servants. Only those come to seek exemption who do not believe in God and the Hereafter and whose hearts are afflicted with doubts and their doubts have made them reluctant.

I am inclined to think that the words “God is fully aware of His pious servants” actually point to such sincere handicapped believers.

وَلَوْ اَرَادُوا الْخُرُوْجَ لَاَعَدُّوْا لَهٗ عُدَّةً وَّلٰكِنْ كَرِهَ اللّٰهُ انْۢبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيْلَ اقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[33]

The verse implies that all their excuses are baseless. It is not that they are lacking in resources; rather they are lacking in the will. Had they wanted they could have gathered some provisions.

It is the established practice of God that those who do not have an intention to do pious deeds, the urge to do them is taken away from them. If they have chosen to sit behind like children, women and the aged, they were deprived of the will and courage by God to undertake this venture.

The word تثبيط means “to stop and turn away a person from doing some task.” The words “so He made them sit” describe God’s established practice about providing the urge to do righteous deeds. The sentence is imbued with sarcasm: if you do not have the courage to go out, go and sit with those who sit in the houses.

In some of the succeeding verses, this sarcasm has become even more poignant.

لَوْ خَرَجُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا زَادُوْكُمْ اِلَّا خَبَالًا وَّلَاۡاَوْضَعُوْا خِلٰلَكُمْ يَبْغُوْنَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ ۚ وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾

لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوْا لَكَ الْاُمُوْرَ حَتّٰى جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَهُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[34]

The word خبال means “disorder” and “evil” and ايضاع means “to run around making efforts.”

The first sentence implies that if these people did not go out for war, then it was for the expediency of the believers.

The words “and there are those among you who do listen to them” refer to the simpletons among the believers. They were not hypocrites; yet because of their naivety would be deceived by the hypocrites. The purpose is to inform the believers in general about a section in them who are very easily influenced by conspiracies.

The expression سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ has been discussed under the explanation of verse 41 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah.

The words “and God is fully aware of these unjust people” sound a threat. Since

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33. And if they had wanted to go out, they could have made some preparation but God did not like their getting up; so made them sit and said: “Keep sitting with those who sit.”

34. If these people had joined you in your march, they would have only caused turmoil in you and all their efforts among you are to incite mischief. And there are those among you who do listen to them and God is fully aware of these unjust people. They have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents until against their will the truth appeared and God’s directive manifested itself.

God is fully aware of the unjust, one day they will meet their fate.

The words “they have sought to spread mischief earlier as well and have changed the form of incidents” refer to some of the previous pranks perpetrated by the hypocrites to harm the believers and to spread disorder among them. They would try to change a matter or an incident by spreading mischief. The Qur’ān has not provided details because the believers already knew what was being insinuated. It was these people who, as has been pointed out in the explanation of the previous *sūrah*, tried to lead the believers to attack the trade caravan in the battle of Badr even though the intention of God and His messenger was clear to them. It was these people who initially advised the Prophet (sws) to counter the attack of the enemy in the battle of Uḥud while being stationed in the city; later when their advice was not accepted, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy distanced himself from the believers right at the time of the battle. Then after the battle, he and his cronies spread the malicious propaganda against the Prophet (sws) that he was, God forbid, an ill-wisher of his people. In this regard, they contended that he was responsible for their killing when he took them to a wrong spot against the advice of the well-wishers and this resulted in their defeat.

It was these people who in the battle of Marīsī‘ were responsible to stir a fight between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, which was however averted. Another very heinous example of their pranks was the incident of *ifk*, which arose through distorted exaggeration of events. After the battle of Ḥunayn because of their wretchedness, they were able to cultivate enmity and malice in the hearts. In short, they tried to create rifts among the believers in every opportunity they got. However, in spite of these subversive activities, God protected the believers from their mischief.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ ائْذَنْ لِّيْ وَلَا تَفْتِنِّيْ ؕ اَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوْا ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ [35]

This is a reference to some hypocrites who tried to present a pious type of excuse for not participating in the battle of Tabūk. They contended that since they were very attracted to women, they should be excused from this battle lest their beauty makes them fall into a trial. Though this excuse must have been presented by a few foolish elements, it was an excuse that was coated with religiosity and piety. For this reason, the Qur’ān specially mentioned it so that the believers were informed of this ploy of Satan: at times, he misleads them in the garb of piety. This excuse is similar to the one some claimants to piety present when they tell their devotees that they do not attend congregational prayers to protect themselves from show-off.

The words “they are already in a trial” are very subtle. In other words, their bitter trial has started in their own houses because they have concocted such an excuse – to

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35. And there are those among them also who say: “Grant me exemption and do not put me through a trial.” – Listen up! They are already in a trial. And indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers.

escape from a religious obligation – which in itself is such a trial that no other trial is needed after this. Their own trial is severer and destructive than their anticipated trial of the Roman beauties.

One of the things evident from the words “and indeed Hell is embracing the disbelievers” is that all such excuse-givers are disbelievers. The second thing evident from them is that howermuch excuses to escape from God they may concoct, the fact is that Hell has surrounded them from all sides; they cannot run away from it.

اِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيْبَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا قَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[36]

This verse exposes the inward self of the hypocrites. Excuses fashioned by them are just a deception. The real thing is their malice for the believers.

Some people have interpreted the words قَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اَمْرَنَا as قَدْ اَخَذْنَآ حِذْرَنَا, which is correct in my opinion.

قُلْ لَّنْ يُّصِيْبَنَآ اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوْلٰىنَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْدَى

الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ۭ وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖٓ اَوْ بِاَيْدِيْنَا ۟ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْٓا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّتَرَبِّصُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾[37]

This is a response to the previous verse in which it is stated that the hypocrites would feel happy if some calamity would befall the believers. They are told that if any such a thing happens, it is their belief that it will happen not because they want it; rather it is because God wants it and there is definitely some good hidden in it. For the believers, hardship and ease, sorrow and joy, death and life – all have some expediency. One grants a believer the opportunity to learn patience, mend his wrong doings and the chance to repent. The second urges him to be grateful, fulfil the rights of others and be good to them. When a believer fights for the cause of God, he is a *ghāzī* and if he dies, he is a martyr.

However, the matter of the hypocrites is different. The consequence of the attitude they have adopted can result in two outcomes: either God will punish them directly or through the hands of the believers. None of these outcomes is good for them.

It may be kept in mind that once the truth has been conclusively communicated, waiting is not an expression of weakness; this wait is for the outcome to manifest itself. I will, God willing, write on this aspect in more detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūḥ.

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[36] And if some success befalls you, they are grieved, and if some calamity befalls you, they say: “Good that this happened. We had already secured ourselves,” and they return joyous.

[37] Tell them: Only that shall befall us what God has ordained for us. He is our guardian and for the believers, it is only befitting that He alone should be trusted. Tell them: You await for us nothing except one out of two good things. But what we await for you is that either God will send His torment to you from Himself or through our hands. So wait, we also are among those who wait with you.

قُلْ اَنْفِقُوْا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا لَّنْ يُّتَقَبَّلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ وَ مَا مَنَعَهُمْ اَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقٰتُهُمْ اِلَّاۤ
اَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ بِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ اِلَّا وَ هُمْ كُسَالٰى وَ لَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ اِلَّا وَ هُمْ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿۵۴﴾[38]

The first of these verses expresses hate and abhorrence for the hypocrites. Their spending for the cause of God has no significance in His eyes. He is not dependent on their spending in any way. He only accepts the spending of those who serve the cause of His religion with true faith and sincerity.

The second verse explains the sentence "you are a people who break promises" of the first verse. In other words, they deny God and His Messenger because they do not fulfil any of the requirements that faith in them entails. They come for prayers out of compulsion because they know that if they don't come, they will not be able to include themselves among the believers. Same was the case with their spending for charity. Both these worship rituals become unacceptable because they are done as a show-off only. Readers may take a look at what I have written in explanation of verse 43 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. I have explained there that the prayer of the hypocrites was no prayer at all; it was acted out to deceive the believers so that they could regard them among themselves. Obviously, such a prayer can never make a person focus his attention towards God; it would lack passion and concentration.

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَ لَاۤ اَوْلَادُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ تَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[39]

Whoever are blessed with wealth and children by God are a source of great treasure for a community if they also have faith and sincerity. Every well-wisher of such a community respects such people. This is because the extent of service they can provide to religion through their persons and wealth cannot be matched by others. Among these hypocrites too, there were many people who had wealth and children and could serve Islam very well and win great reward in the hereafter. Thus the Prophet (sws) also dearly wished that they are blessed with true faith and sincerity and by fulfilling their obligations towards God's favours earn a high reward. But even when after trying his best, these people proved a lost cause, he was informed by God

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38. Tell them: Whether you spend willingly or unwillingly, none of your spending will be accepted. You are a people who break promises. If their spending is not worth accepting, then the only reason is that they have shown disbelief in God and His Messenger. And if they come for prayer, it is because of compulsion and if they spend, they spend willingly.

39. So, do not give any importance to their wealth and children. God only desires to punish them in the life of this world through them, and they lose their lives in the state of disbelief.

to not give any importance to their wealth and children. They will not contribute in any way. In fact, if anything, they can potentially create problems for the believers.

The worldly punishment referred to here is the one which had become destined for the rejecters of the Prophet (sws) and whose details have been mentioned earlier. Obviously, if these hypocrites had adopted the same attitude as the disbelievers, their fate would have been no different.

It is evident from the words تَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ that those make the wealth and resources of this world to be a noose, their souls are dragged out of their bodies gradually. This noose grips them so strongly that it becomes virtually impossible for them to escape its grasp and revert to the right way.

وَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ اِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ ؕ وَمَا هُمْ مِّنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّفْرَقُوْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُوْنَ مَلْجَاً اَوْ مَغٰرٰتٍ اَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا اِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾[40]

The word حلف generally is used in the pejorative sense. People who do not have character try to mostly seek refuge in false oaths to prove themselves worthy. Thus it is explained at various instances in the Qur'ān that the hypocrites would try to compensate for their lack of character by swearing false oaths. In order to assure Muslims that they were among them, they would indulge in such swearing so that they should have no doubts in this regard. The Qur'ān has clarified that this is an absolute lie and only the rope of fear has made them cling to the believers. They have no place left to escape. They have already seen the fate of the Idolaters and that of the People of the Book too is before their eyes. Where can they run to? If they leave the country, their interests will suffer. Thus they have no option but to remain attached with the believers.

The verb فـرق means "to be scared and worried" and فروقة refers to a coward.

The second of the verses cited explains what is said earlier. The implication is that they will do anything to protect their interests.

The expression جَمَحَ الفَرَس means تَغَلَّبَ عَلَىٰ رَاكِبِهٖ وَذَهَبَ بِهٖ ولا ينثنى (the horse became out of the rider's control and ran off with him speedily). It means that the Prophet (sws) would not have been able to do anything and they would have dashed away. The real thing is that at the moment they are not finding any refuge and hence because of cowardice they are forced to align themselves with the believers.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّلْمِزُكَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ ۚ فَاِنْ اُعْطُوْا مِنْهَا رَضُوْا وَاِنْ لَّمْ يُعْطَوْا مِنْهَاۤ اِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ رَضُوْا مَاۤ

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[40] And they repeatedly swear oaths by God to assure you that they are from among you even though they are not from among you. They are in fact cowards. Had they found an abode, a cave or a place to sit in, they would have broken their string and run frantically towards it.

اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۙ وَقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ سَيُؤْتِيْنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَرَسُوْلُهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ رٰغِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾[41]

In the previous verse, the state of the wealthy hypocrites was referred to. Now the poor among them are alluded to.

Consider the words “And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: ‘God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God.’” They instruct them about the right attitude they should have adopted.

If instead of censuring, picking faults and thinking evil they had behaved magnanimously, they would have earned more reward from God as well the affection of His Messenger. Alas! Instead of adopting an honourable and sincere approach, they launched a campaign against the Messenger.

It may also be noted that the answer of such a conditional sentence is generally suppressed in classical Arabic. This creates emphasis in the sentence if the instance is of emphasis. Similarly, if the instance is of expressing sorrow or rebuke or anger or affection, then they too become more evident if it is in line with these instances respectively. I have unfolded this suppression in the translation.

اِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَ فِى الرِّقَابِ وَ الْغٰرِمِيْنَ وَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ ابْنِ
السَّبِيْلِ ؕ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾[42]

This verse describes the heads in which charity can be distributed. The purpose is to make evident to those among the hypocrites – who were greedy for wealth and were not even eligible for charity – where it will be spent. It is subtly apparent from this that these hypocrites who censure the Prophet (sws) with regarding to charity for not giving them what they desired were not even entitled to it.

The word *ṣadaqāt* is a general term with respect to *zakāh*. It includes all wealth that is given to earn reward from God whether it is *zakāh* or charity. Since through this money, a person’s sincerity and strength of faith becomes evident, it is called *ṣadaqah*. Its origin is *ṣidq* whose essence is harmony between one’s words and deeds.

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[41] And among them are those also who censure you in the distribution of charity. If they receive from it, they remain happy and if they do not, they become furious. And it would have been better for them if they had remained content with what God and His Messenger had given them and said: “God is sufficient for us. God will bless us out of His grace and His Messenger also; We only want God.”

[42] Charity in is only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are in charge of its set-up, and for those whose hearts are to be assured. Moreover, for the release of necks and to help those who have been inflicted with losses and for the way of God and for the welfare of the wayfarers. This is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise.

Following are the heads of *ṣadaqāt.*

(i) الْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ (*al-fuqarā’* wa *al-masākīn*): Both these words are common in the sense that both refer to people in need. Thus, they are used in the Qur’ān interchangeably as well. However, there is a certain difference as well between the two. The word *faqīr* (singular of *fuqarā’*) is the opposite of *ghanī* (rich). Thus in verse 135 of Sūrah al-Nisā’, it is stated: إِنْ يَّكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ أَوْلٰى بِهِمَا. For this reason, every person who is not *ghanī* but is needy is actually a *faqīr* regardless of whether he asks for his needs or does not do so owing to his self-esteem. Thus for the needy who have this self-esteem, the word *fuqarā’* is used in verse 273 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The word *miskīn* (singular *masākīn*) implies a higher degree of poverty. The word *maskanat* includes helplessness, vulnerability and meekness.

(ii) الْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا (*al-‘āmilīna ‘alayhā*): This refers to all those people who are deputed to collect *ṣadaqāt* and to keep their record. Their salaries and office expenditures will be reimbursed under this head.

(iii) الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ (*al-mu’allafat-i qulūbuhum*): This includes all those who need to be kept aligned with the interest of Islam and the Muslims. At times, an Islamic government has to deal with certain influential elements who are not fully under its political control and if they are forced to come under its control, it is feared that they will cause harm by joining the army ranks. Especially in border areas, such people can pose a great threat if they turn into enemies or earn the sympathy of the enemy. It is in the interest of an Islamic government to keep them aligned. The way it is done is that they are financially supported. This is a political expense which an Islamic government can dispense through money found in other heads too. Such people can be non-Muslims too as well as those who are Muslims by name only. One benefit that can be drawn from this is to bring such elements close to the teachings of Islam.

One group of our jurists regards this head to be revoked once the Prophet (sws) had passed away or, in other words, the dominance of Islam had been achieved. However, in my opinion, this view does not carry much weight. This head is used in the political interest of Islam, as has just been indicated. It is governed by circumstances – that can arise at any time. Even a strong Islamic government at times needs to resort to it to circumvent any nuisance. This is because using force is not always an option and can create complications, which is against sagacity.

(iv) فِى الرِّقَابِ (*fī al-riqāb*): A governing noun is suppressed here and the actual construction is فى فك الرقاب. This money can also be spent to free the necks of slaves from the yokes of slavery. The use of the letter فِى here also shows that from this head all works that relate to their welfare which are prescribed for their freedom and strengthening their economic status can be financed.

(v) الْغٰرِمِيْنَ (*al-ghārimīn*): The expression غَرِمَ فِى التِّجَارَة means that “such and such a person suffered a loss in his trade.” The word غَرَامَة or غرم means penalty or loss. The word *ghārim* (singular of *ghārimīn*) is used for a person who has faced losses in his business or is burdened under debt so much that he does not have the strength to pay it back. Under this head, money can be used to pay back the debts of such people and to support them so that they can once again stand on their feet and give benefit to the society through their abilities. It may be kept in mind that in an Islamic state, all illegal means to earning and all prohibited means of over-spending are forbidden. Hence the question that a *ghārim* has reached this state by adopting methods that are against the *sharī'ah* or that the calamity he is suffering from is because of some illegal means does not even arise. The context and occasion of the verses show that here a *ghārim* does not refer to a criminal; it refers to a person who suffered losses while trying to earn a living or to a person who has to pay a debt or penalty.

(vi) فِيۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ (*fī sabīlillāh*): This is a comprehensive term under which money can be expended on undertakings like *jihād* and preaching and teaching religion. Circumstances and time may desire more emphasis on some of these and less on others; however, all ventures related to serve the cause of religion come under this head.

(vii) اِبۡنِ السَّبِيۡلِ (*ibn al-sabīl*): Its independent mention evidences the fact that a traveller is entitled to this money on the mere basis of being a traveller. Journeys reduce a person to such a state that even though he may not be strictly needy in the literal sense, since he is a stranger in a land, he becomes a dependent for his needs and thus becomes entitled to help. The money from this head can be used for helping such travellers, for the construction of roads and for their food-facilities and rest houses. It may be kept in mind that this head has been stated with the letter فِيۡ. It becomes evident from this that money under this head can be spent on all undertakings related to facilitating and providing comfort to the travellers

A group of our jurists regards the particle ل in اِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلۡفُقَرَآءِ to specifically refer to تمليك ذاتی (exclusive personal-possession). Then, as a result, it deduces that *zakāh* and charity money cannot be spent on any project of social welfare related to the poor and needy that does not establish exclusive personal-possession of anyone but it benefits every one in their collective capacity. In my opinion, this view is not based on any strong argument. In the first place, the particle ل is not merely specific for exclusive personal possession; it has multiple meanings, and has been used in all these meanings in the Qur'ān. There is no reason to regard it specific for exclusive personal-possession. When the particle ل is also commonly used in the meanings of welfare, benefit and prerogative, why cannot it be taken in these meanings? Moreover, some heads in the verse are mentioned such that they are governed by the particle فِيۡ, and the most obvious meaning of this particle is not exclusive personal-possession; on the contrary, it is service, prosperity and welfare.

Moreover, it is obvious that the amount of benefit that can be provided to the poor is far greater when money is spent on their projects of welfare rather than through *tamlīk*. Then why should the circle of this benefit be restricted by using the instrument of *tamlīk*? For more details on this topic, readers are advised to read my article *Mas'alah-e tamlīk* (the Issue of Tamlīk) in my book *Tawḍiḥāt*.

In the words “this is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise” the mandatory nature of the directive is referred to as well as it being based on knowledge and wisdom.

Section VI: (61-72)

In the succeeding verses, first the pranks and the harassing behaviour of the hypocrites are mentioned and they are warned on this. After that men and women from the hypocrites and men and women from the believers are compared so that faith and hypocrisy become evident before everyone. Such a comparison is also the most helpful in making facts more prominent and it also helps people in reforming themselves.

Readers may proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ اُذُنٌ ؕ قُلْ اُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَرَحْمَةٌ
لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ
وَرَسُوْلُهٗۤ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّرْضُوْهُ اِنْ كَانُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّهٗ مَنْ يُّحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاَنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ
خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٦٣﴾ يَحْذَرُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ اَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُوْرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ
قُلِ اسْتَهْزِءُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوْضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ؕ قُلْ اَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوْا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ نَّعْفُ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ
مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَآئِفَةًۢ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ اَلْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ
بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ ؕ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾
وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
مُّقِيْمٌ ۙ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوْۤا اَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرَ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ؕ فَاسْتَمْتَعُوْا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ
فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِيْ خَاضُوْا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ
اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّ
ثَمُوْدَ ۙ۬ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ ؕ اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ
كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ

عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَيُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٧١﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً
فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٧٢﴾

And among them are those also who aggrieve the Prophet and say: "This person believes all that he hears." Say: He intently hears what is good for you. He believes in God, trusts the believers and is mercy for those among you who have accepted faith. And those who are aggrieving God's Messenger, there is a painful punishment for them. They swear in the name of God before you to satisfy you. Yet if they are believers, God and His Messenger are more worthy that he be pleased. Do they not know that he who opposes God and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell where he shall abide forever? This is great humiliation. (61-63)

The hypocrites fear that a *sūrah* may be revealed to them which exposes to them the secrets of their hearts. Say: Make fun. God is bound to expose what you fear. And if you ask them, they will say: "We were only jesting and entertaining ourselves." Ask them: Were you jesting with God, His revelations and His Messenger? Don't put forth lame excuses. You have renounced faith after accepting it. Even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers. (64-66)

Hypocrite men and Hypocrite women are all of the same type. They enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands. They have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them. These Hypocrites always break their promises. God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever. This alone is sufficient for them. And the curse of God be on them. And for them is an eternal torment like the ones who lived before you. They were mightier and blessed with greater wealth and more children than you. So, they benefited from their share and you also benefited from your share in the very way those before you benefited from their share and you also spoke nonsense as they did. It is these people whose deeds went waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the ones who shall be the losers. Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves. (67-70)

And believing men and believing women are friends to one another. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. It is these people whom God will bless with His mercy. God is Powerful, very Wise. God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow; they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all.

This alone is supreme success. (71-72)

Explanation

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ اُذُنٌ ؕ قُلْ اُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾[43]

The word اُذُن means “ear” and when this word is used as a metaphor for someone it carries a tone of disparagement for that person disguised in praise. It refers to his gullibility; he accepts whatever he hears from any Tom, Dick and Harry. It is disguised disparagement because to listen to everyone is in fact a praiseworthy attribute and speaks of a person’s decency; but at the same time it also refers to his lack of insight and vision.

The hypocrites would use this word for the Prophet (sws) keeping in view this meaning. They would make fun of God, His messenger and His revelations in their gatherings. When news of this behaviour would reach the Prophet (sws) through some means and he would express his displeasure at it, the hypocrites clarified their position before people by saying: he is a pious person; whatever he hears, he believes in it and on this basis becomes disillusioned from such sincere and obedient people as themselves; otherwise, how can words of disrespect be uttered by us? And by way of jest and entertainment, if some words of disrespect are uttered unintentionally, then this is an entirely different thing.

The words “Say: He intently hears what is good for you; He believes in God” are an answer to this claim. The Prophet’s ears are always open to their well-being. He always desires that their good intentions, good words and works reach his ear and make him happy. He is not interested to hear any of their evil words or works. A prophet’s affection for his followers is much greater than a father’s affection for his son. He is not after finding their mistakes; rather he is after finding their positive traits and at every instant wants to hear some good news about them. Thus if these hypocrites think that he is all ears for them, then this is true in this respect and this is actually a blessing for them. It is not something they should mock at him for.

The words “he believes in God, trusts the believers” imply that the notion they have about the Prophet (sws) that he listens to every Tom, Dick and Harry is wrong. He believes in God and only accepts that news which he receives from true and sincere believers. If God informs him about something regarding them, then what more can be closer to the truth? Similarly, if the believers report something to him about them,

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43. And among them are those also who aggrieve the Prophet and say: “This person believes all that he hears.” Say: He intently hears what is good for you. He believes in God, trusts the believers and is mercy for those among you who have accepted faith. And those who are aggrieving God’s Messenger, there is a painful punishment for them.

why should he not believe in it? In other words, the sources of the Prophet's information about them are not unfounded and frail. He is also not a gullible person and prone to having evil estimations. He is guided by God and listens to the believers. When the preposition ل is used with إيمان, it means "to accept or understand."

The words "and is mercy for those among you who have accepted faith" mean that the Prophet (sws) is affection personified for those true in faith. He is not their ill-wisher so that he listens to their ill-wishers. He wants their betterment and their success in both this world and the next depends on becoming entitled to his affection and mercy by adhering to true faith. The verb اٰمَنُوۡا here is in its real meaning; it refers to true faith and just to lay claim to faith. The latter – who want to remain in their state and also try to harass the Prophet (sws) – should remember that there is a painful torment.

يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمۡ لِيُرۡضُوۡكُمۡ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗۤ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ يُّرۡضُوۡهُ اِنۡ كَانُوۡا مُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ [44]

This verse addresses the believers and exposes the oaths of the hypocrites at the right instance. In other words, what they are doing to prove their faith to be worthy is actually proving it unworthy. This reproach is the same as the one found in verse 49 (they have already in a trial). At times, the excuse for a sin is worst than the sin itself. The attitude of presenting an excuse by the hypocrites proved that they were more sinful. Had they been upright, they would have tried to please God and His Prophet (sws) instead of swearing false oaths to show the Muslims that the Prophet (sws) was gullible. This was a very deceptive scheme of working propaganda against him.

Here the singular pronoun in يُّرۡضُوۡهُ is noteworthy. Since both God and His Messenger can be pleased in the same way, this pronoun has been used.

اَلَمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّهٗ مَنۡ يُّحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ فَاَنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيۡهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الۡخِزۡىُ الۡعَظِيۡمُ ﴿۶۳﴾ [45]

The verbal noun مجادة means "to become an enemy of someone." The word فَاَنَّ is co-ordinated to اَنَّهٗ.

This verse rebukes the hypocrites on their above-referred to propaganda. The implication is that instead of seeking forgiveness for their sins from God and pleasing His messenger, they have launched a campaign to prove their innocence by swearing false oaths. Their purpose is to strengthen the party they have set up against God and His messenger so that they can carry on their work more effectively. The question is that even after such a long period of preaching, has it not become evident to them that those who become the enemies of God and His messenger will abide forever in Hell,

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44. They swear in the name of God before you to satisfy you. Yet if they are believers, God and His Messenger are more worthy that he be pleased.

45. Do they not know that he who opposes God and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell where he shall abide forever? This is great humiliation.

which is a great humiliation.

There is a subtle reference in the words “this is great humiliation” that if today they are able to save themselves from humiliation by playing this prank, what plan do they have to save themselves from the humiliation in the next world?

يَحۡذَرُ الۡمُنٰفِقُوۡنَ اَنۡ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سُوۡرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمۡ بِمَا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ قُلِ اسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخۡرِجٌ مَّا تَحۡذَرُوۡنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[46]

The word يَحۡذَرُ means “to be scared and to be on guard.” The expression تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ means تُقۡرَءُ عَلَيۡهِم (it should be recited out to them).

This verse brings forth the background in which the hypocrites had launched a campaign to prove their innocence: up till then, they were criticized in the form of insinuations so that they were not humiliated much and if they wanted to mend their affairs, they had its opportunity; however, in this *sūrah*, they see a change in style and some of their inner secrets have been discussed; this has worried them lest a *sūrah* is revealed which exposes all their secrets. Thus it was because of this fear that they tried to prove their innocence through false oaths. It should be noted that just as for the Idolaters and the People of the Book, this *sūrah* is the last and final word, similarly, for the hypocrites too, it is the last and final word. They are fully exposed in it, as will become evident from succeeding verses.

وَلَئِنۡ سَاَلۡتَهُمۡ لَيَقُوۡلُنَّ اِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوۡضُ وَنَلۡعَبُ ؕ قُلۡ اَبِاللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ كُنۡتُمۡ تَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ ﴿٦٥﴾[47]

The real meaning of خوض is “to enter a sea.” However, when it is used with reference to conversation, it can also mean “to indulge in hair-splitting” as well as “to wander from away from the actual meaning by drifting to other derivative meanings one after the other.”

This is actually an example of another excuse of a sin presented by the hypocrites that is worse than the sin itself.

لَا تَعۡتَذِرُوۡا قَدۡ كَفَرۡتُمۡ بَعۡدَ اِيۡمَانِكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ نَّعۡفُ عَنۡ طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ نُعَذِّبۡ طَآئِفَةًۢ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا مُجۡرِمِيۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾[48]

The hypocrites are told to not indulge in excuses because they are worse than the sins for which they are being presented. What more does it require for a person to be a criminal if he mocks at and makes fun of God’s revelations? This is nothing but

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46. The hypocrites fear that a *sūrah* may be revealed to them which exposes to them the secrets of their hearts. Say: Make fun. God is bound to expose what you fear.

47. And if you ask them, they will say: “We were only jesting and entertaining ourselves.” Ask them: Were you jesting with God, His revelations and His Messenger?

48. Don’t put forth lame excuses. You have renounced faith after accepting it. Even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers.

reverting to disbelief after expressing belief. If they had laid claim to faith, then it was their obligation to provide its proof through their deeds but their deeds provide proof of disbelief. This is because making fun of God, His revelations and His messenger is nothing but disbelief. In verse 70 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, this issue has been discussed already.

Consider now the words “even if We pardon a faction of yours, We shall definitely punish another because they in fact are wrongdoers.” It is evident from earlier verses that there were many factions among the hypocrites that had different levels of hypocrisy and mischief in them. Some of their factions were very dangerous, as will become evident from later verses. They had plotted such schemes to harm Islam and Muslims that even one of them had materialized, it would have overshadowed the ones plotted by open enemies. These words are about such factions. Thus, later in this very *sūrah*, the founders of the Ḍarār mosque and some other factions are mentioned along with the fate they met.

اَلْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ ؕ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعَنَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوْۤا اَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرَ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ؕ فَاسْتَمْتَعُوْا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ
فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِيْ خَاضُوْا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ
الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اَلَمْ يَاْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۙ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ
وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ ؕ اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[49]

Until now, the hypocrites were part of the believers because of their claim to faith. Here, for the first time, they are made distinct by describing their traits and they are regarded to be on the same side in this world and in the hereafter as the Idolaters and the People of the Book. This is also a warning to them that they should not try any further to remain intermingled with the believers. At the same time, these verses inform the believers too to not let such black sheep enter their folds. In other words, this was the first step to cleanse a Muslim society from unwanted elements. It also indicates to the believers that just as they have declared acquittal from the Idolaters and the People of the Book, they should also sift out these claimants of faith from their ranks who are similar to these two factions as regards their deeds and morals.

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[49] Hypocrite men and Hypocrite women are all of the same type. They enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands. They have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them. These Hypocrites always break their promises. God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever. This alone is sufficient for them. And the curse of God be on them. And for them is an eternal torment like the ones who lived before you. They were mightier and blessed with greater wealth and more children than you. So, they benefited from their share and you also benefited from your share in the very way those before you benefited from their share and you also spoke nonsense as they did. It is these people whose deeds went waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the ones who shall be the losers. Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves.

Here besides hypocrite men, their women have also been specifically mentioned and regarded to have an equal stake and share. The purpose is to admonish them too and inform them that they will meet the same fate as their men. They will not be able to save themselves if they do not protect themselves from God's scourge. To be a subservient category is no excuse in matters of religion. Every soul whether man or woman is responsible for its own salvation. Evident from this is also that women too had a prominent share in this mischief of hypocrisy. This is especially because the love for life and wealth is the foremost cause of hypocrisy. Women have the greatest share in invigorating men with this love. A narrative states that wives and children make a person stingy and cowardly. The real ailment of the hypocrites mentioned earlier is that the love of wealth and children had prevailed upon them with regard to the requisites of faith.

The words "they enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands" show that all their actions are opposite to what their religion says. They stop people from they should urge them to and vice versa. They close their fists because of stinginess and mock at those who spend their hard-earned wealth for the cause of God and thereby aggrieve them.

The words "they have forgotten God; so, God has also become indifferent to them" depict the reason for their foolishness and deprivation. In verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is similarly stated: وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ.[50] God becoming indifferent to them means that He deprives them of His guidance and the urge to do good. This guidance and urge is only provided to those who keep Him in remembrance.

The words "these Hypocrites always break their promises" expose them: no one should regard them to be claimants of faith because they say so. This is not true. They actually go back on their words and are traitors. After pledging the agreement of "to listen and to obey," they have broken it and have tried to uproot Islam by while professing to be a part of it. For this reason, they have broken all records of traitorship and dishonesty.

The words "God has promised the fire of Hell for hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers in which they shall abide forever" depict their fate in the hereafter. Hell will totally destroy them as depicted by the words “this alone is sufficient for them.” Nothing more will be required.

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[50] And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

God’s curse will be on them as a result of which all doors of hope will close. A perpetual torment will prevail upon them; they will never be able to escape from it.

The words “like the ones who lived before you” directly address the hypocrites and threaten them. This enhances the intensity of the warning. They should not arrogantly think that since they have an abundance in wealth and children, their attitude is not disliked by God. So if He has given you so much in this world, He gave even more to those before them. But it so happened that when they had received their destined benefit from this life, they were destroyed by God. Like them, the hypocrites too have gained what was destined for them and have also indulged in hair-splitting like them; now their own time of destruction is at hand. Just the deeds of the earlier people went waste in this world and the next, their deeds too will do so and they too will end up as losers. The implication is that they should not look at their wealth and children; they should in fact look at their deeds. The former are given by God to the wretched and the miscreants too. His verdicts are actually passed on the character and conduct of people and not on their wealth.

Consider the verse: “Has not the anecdotes of those before them reached them – the people of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the dwellers of Madyan and the overturned settlements? Their messengers brought veritable signs to them. So, it was not that God was unjust to them; they, in fact, were unjust to themselves.” Names of the past nations are furnished here that were referred to earlier. The anecdotes of all these nations have been mentioned in Sūrah al-A‘rāf. The nation of Abraham (sws) refers to the nation he invited to monotheism and then after losing hope in them migrated from them. The “overturned settlements” refer to the city of Lot (sws). God communicated the truth in a conclusive way to all these nations through His messengers. They denied them and continued to adhere to their rebelliousness. As a consequence, God destroyed them. The implication is that history is going to repeat itself for the hypocrites now.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ
يُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۷۱﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۷۲﴾[51]

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[51] And believing men and believing women are friends to one another. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and obey God and His Messenger. It is these people whom God will bless with His mercy. God is Powerful, very Wise. God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow;

After explaining the character of hypocrite men and women, these verses depict the character of believing men and women. When believing men go out to wage war for the cause of God, believing women do not try to stop them; on the contrary, they encourage them from the depth of their hearts. Moreover, through their sacrifice, selflessness and faithfulness cooperate with them in this venture and in this way themselves become entitled to reward.

The contrast between the two groups is clearly brought out by the two sets of verses. Readers can compare them.

The words “it is these people whom God will bless with His mercy” show that when both have different attitudes towards God, they are dealt differently too by Him. Men and women of the hypocrites are cursed, as depicted in the earlier verses.

The attributes of God being Powerful and very Wise entail that all His actions are based on mercy and justice. The letter س appended to سَيَرْحَمُهُمْ shows that very soon these glad tidings will materialize for the believers.

Consider the verses: “God has promised believing men and believing women orchards below which rivers would flow; they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all. This alone is supreme success.” They occur in contrast to verse 68 where the hypocrite men and women are warned. The “pleasure of God” and “eternal orchards” bring out the stark contrast with verse 68 where curse is mentioned for hypocrite men and women. Just as being cursed comprehensively depicts deprivation from all favours, similarly, “pleasure of God” is a comprehensive expression for the abiding favours and blessings of God. While reading these verses, readers may keep in mind the words “these Hypocrites always break their promises” of verse 67. Contrasting verses are very helpful in bringing out the coherence in a discourse.

Section VII: (73-80)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is told that because of his magnanimity and graciousness, these hypocrites are still clinging on to Islam and the Muslims. He should now become stern with them so that if they can mend their affairs they should; otherwise, they should meet their fate. They utter words of disbelief in their gatherings and try to assure him through false oaths. They had very dangerous intentions but God did not let them materialize. God and His Messenger have blessed them with favours. Instead of becoming thankful on this, their animosity and mischief-mongering against Islam has increased. They would say that if God gives them wealth, they will generously spend it for His cause. However, when God did give them wealth, they

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they shall live in them forever and pure abodes in eternal orchards. And the pleasure of God also which is the greatest of all. This alone is supreme success.

turned away from Him and His messenger. This attitude firmly implanted hypocrisy in such a way in their hearts that now it cannot be uprooted.

After this, it is stated that not only have they become stingy, they mock, deride and discourage the believers who heartily and humbly spend from their hard-earned wealth. The purpose is to stop them from spending. At the same time, the Prophet (sws) has been sternly stopped from seeking forgiveness for them: they are no longer worthy of this affection from him; they deserve to be treated harshly in every respect.

Readers may proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ اغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَ بِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ
مَا قَالُوْا ؕ وَ لَقَدْ قَالُوْا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِسْلَامِهِمْ وَ هَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا ۚ وَ مَا نَقَمُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اَنْ اَغْنٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ
رَسُوْلُهٗ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّتُوْبُوْا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَ مَا
لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ وَّلِىٍّ وَّ لَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ لَئِنْ اٰتٰىنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ
الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّاۤ اٰتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَ تَوَلَّوْا وَّ هُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ
يَلْقَوْنَهٗ بِمَاۤ اَخْلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا وَعَدُوْهُ وَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَ نَجْوٰىهُمْ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿٧٨﴾ ۚ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَلْمِزُوْنَ الْمُطَّوِّعِيْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ وَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ اِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ
فَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنْهُمْ ؕ سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ ۫ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ
لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾

O Prophet! Wage *jihād* against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be stern with them. And Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode. They swear oaths by God that they did not utter that statement whereas they have uttered that word of disbelief and renounced faith after embracing it. And they wanted what they have not been able to obtain. This enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches. If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land. (73-74)

And there are those among them too who promised God: “If God blesses us with His bounty, we shall generously spend in charity and do shall be among those who do virtuous deeds in abundance.” So, when God gave them out of His grace, they started to show stinginess in it and turned their faces in evasion. Then, as a consequence, God implanted hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they went back on their promise with God and because they continued to lie. Do they not know that God is aware of their secrets and their whisperings and God knows very well everything that is hidden? The whisperings of those who censure Muslims regarding charity who spend it whole-heartedly and the poor have only that to spend which they earn from their hard labour; so, they make fun of them. God made fun of them and for them is a painful torment. Whether you ask forgiveness for them or not, even if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God is not going to forgive them. This is because they denied God and His Messenger and God does not guide those who breach promises. (75-80)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۷۳﴾[52]

The verse primarily emphasizes on the Prophet (sws) to totally change his attitude with hypocrites and sternly call them to account. However, at the same time, the disbelievers are also referred to. The purpose is to show that now these hypocrites belong to their category. The word *jihād* encapsulates both war and stern accountability. In other words, the Prophet (sws) should wage such war against the disbelievers which he has been directed to under the declaration of acquittal. He should no longer be gracious to them. They have not valued his magnanimity and take wrong advantage of it. As a result, they have become even more audacious in their mischief. They use false excuses and false oaths as their shields. In spite of knowing this reality, the Prophet (sws) has been courteous to them. This should now end and he should now be strict with them in every matter so that they know that their veil of falsehood and deception will soon be lifted to expose them. Now, they will either have to become true Muslims or meet the fate that has been destined for the disbelievers. Readers may look up what I have written under verse 43. The verse under discussion is its further explanation.

Consider the sentence "and Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode." It implies that in this world, these hypocrites will face the sternness of the Prophet (sws) and his followers and in the hereafter they will end up in the evil abode of Hell. This is because such ruthless angels are deputed on it who will show no softness; they will follow every directive of God, as is mentioned in verse 6 of Sūrah al-Taḥrīm.

يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ مَا قَالُوْا ؕ وَلَقَدْ قَالُوْا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا ۚ وَمَا نَقَمُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اَنْ اَغْنٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ
وَرَسُوْلُهٗ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّتُوْبُوْا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيْ

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[52] O Prophet! Wage *jihād* against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be stern with them. And Hell is their abode and it is a very evil abode.

الْاَرْضِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿۷۴﴾[53]

It has been stated earlier that the hypocrites would make fun of God, His revelations and His messenger in their gatherings. However, when they are asked about this, they just evade answering it. Instead, they swear oaths and assure the Muslims that they did no such thing and that they were only jesting. While referring to these false oaths, the term “word of disbelief” is used.

If the previous verse had included them in the category of disbelievers, this verse actually spells out its reason. By making fun they are guilty of disbelief and have thereby renounced faith after accepting it. This shows the intensity of their crime. It may be noted that God’s anger for those who lay claim to faith but with their deeds attest to disbelief is more than His anger for the disbelievers. This is because in this attitude deception is added to disbelief. In verses 2-3 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff, this reality is stated thus: كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ.[54] It is for this reason that it is mentioned in verse 145 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ that the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell.

The words “and they wanted what they have not been able to obtain” subtly allude to all their evil plans and also their deprivations and failures. In other words, if they had been able to, they would have tried to uproot Islam from the land but God did not allow them to. In verse 48, I have referred to certain pranks and conspiracies of the hypocrites and more pranks will be mentioned ahead. However, on every occasion they miserably failed because God exposed their plans at the right time.

The words “this enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches” point to their wretched and worthless nature: while God and His messenger showed them favour, they in return started to make fun of them and day and night conspired to root out Islam from the land. Here, it needs to be kept in mind that before the advent of Islam, the people of Madīnah were very poor. After its advent, when conquests took place their financial condition changed. In particular, the hypocrites became very wealthy. In the first place, the Prophet (sws) would give them more to show affection; moreover, because of their greediness they would also take more by fabricating various excuses. Furthermore, they never spent what they would obtain. They would openly ignore any opportunity to spend in the cause of God. Thus these people became wealthy because of Islam. In return, they continued to connive and conspire against it.

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[53] They swear oaths by God that they did not utter that statement whereas they have uttered that word of disbelief and renounced faith after embracing it. And they wanted what they have not been able to obtain. This enmity of theirs is nothing but the consequence of God and His Messenger by their grace rewarding them with riches. If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land.

[54] Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God’s sight that you should say something what you never do.

Consider next the words "If they repent, it is better for them and if they show indifference, God will punish them in a painful way in this world also and in the next as well. And they will not have any supporter or helper in the land." They sound a warning. Their worldly punishment will be the same as the one which has become destined for the disbelievers and idolaters and in the hereafter too, they will be their companions. They will be isolated and left alone by their allies because the latter would be too busy in trying to escape their own fate. They will not be able to help their own selves, let alone others.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ لَئِنْ اٰتٰىنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ
مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ بِمَآ اَخْلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا وَعَدُوْهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾[55]

Reference here is to those among them who has become wealthy because of Islam. The word تَوَلَّوْا generally means "they turned away" implying that there was no hope left for them to come back; however, here it is qualified by the verb مُّعْرِضُوْنَ; thus it implies that when they hear of spending in charity, they walk away such that they never even look back.

It is a strange weakness of a person that until he is not able to obtain a thing, he expresses the resolve that as soon as he is able to acquire it, he will not waste it like others in a wrong way; in fact, he will spend it for such and such a noble cause and set an example of justice and piety. However, as soon as he is able to acquire it, he does not even remember this commitment; he, in fact, regards it to be a consequence of his own effort and entitlement. He spends it for the cause of Satan instead of spending it for the cause of God. Very few are the fortunate who use what they obtain in the right way, thinking that this is an obligation they owe to its giver.

The word أعقاب means to make something manifest itself as a consequence of another.

The last verse implies that these people nourished hypocrisy in themselves for a long period of time. It did not enter them accidentally; it was a consequence of deliberately breaking a promise and of continuous lies and deception. Only through death will they be able to relieve themselves of it. Believers should not expect that

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55. And there are those among them too who promised God: "If God blesses us with His bounty, we shall generously spend in charity and do shall be among those who do virtuous deeds in abundance." So, when God gave them out of His grace, they started to show stinginess in it and turned their faces in evasion. Then, as a consequence, God implanted hypocrisy in their hearts until the day they will meet Him because they went back on their promise with God and because they continued to lie.

they will have the urge to repent and mend themselves. Only when the reality comes before them like the sun will this thick veil of their hearts be lifted. Something similar is said about the builders of the Ḍarār mosque later in verse 110 of this *sūrah*: لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِيْ بَنَوْا رِيْبَةً فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (This building which they have built will always be a basis of doubt in their hearts except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise.)

اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوٰىهُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿۷۸﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَلْمِزُوْنَ الْمُطَّوِّعِيْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ فِي الصَّدَقٰتِ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ اِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنْهُمْ ۭ سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُمْ ۡ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۹﴾[56]

The words "do they not know that God …" express wonder. The verse implies that even after such a long period of instruction and education, purification and cleansing and after being revealed so many facts, so thick-headed are these people that they could not know that God knows all the secrets. The fact is that God knows everything is expressed in the Qur'ān in the form of a verb and also in the form of an adjective. For this reason, here and even more clearly at other instances in the Qur'ān, the all-embracing knowledge of God is expressed in the form of a verb as well as an adjective. Keeping in view the coherence in the discourse, this verse is a prelude to the next one in which the whisperings and criticisms of the hypocrites are exposed. They did this among their circles to discourage sincere believers.

The اَلَّذِيْنَ in verse 79, in my opinion, is a permutative (*badal*) of the accusative pronoun هُمْ in نَجْوٰىهُمْ in verse 78. Though I am not fully convinced about this, I have translated the verse keeping in view this interpretation. Zamakhsharī too has referred to it.[57]

Both مُتَطَوِّع and مُطَّوِع are the same words. The latter refers to a person who does not remain content to merely fulfil his obligations but out of his own will and strength does optional deeds of virtue in abundance as well.

The word لمز means "to blame, "to censure" and "to deride."

In the earlier verses, it was stated that the hypocrites showed evasion in spending for the cause of God; not it is being told that not only do they not spend themselves, they cannot see others doing this too. They censure and deride those who do so. As for the generous and sincere Muslims who spent with generosity and large-heartedness,

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56. Do they not know that God is aware of their secrets and their whisperings and God knows very well everything that is hidden? The whisperings of those who censure Muslims regarding charity who spend it whole-heartedly and the poor have only that to spend which they earn from their hard labour; so, they make fun of them. God made fun of them and for them is a painful torment.

57. Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, 279.

they would call them people who were fame-greedy and show-offs and that they did it to over-awe others with their religiosity and generosity. As for the poor Muslims who did not have anything to spend and spent whatever little they could earn from their hard labour, they would make fun of them and make sarcastic remarks to discourage them. Typically they would say that these people had become more generous than the proverbial Ḥātim Ṭā’ī.

It is the mentality of the stingy that they want others to be stingy as well so that no one exposes their own stinginess. A person with severed nose wants others to be like him too so that there is no one to point out his own physical defect. The hypocrites too had the same mentality. It also satisfied their emotions of enmity against Islam. They did not want to spend a penny for Islam nor did they want others to do so. When against their wish, they saw others spending generously for Islam as if they are filling their own treasures – so much so that a labourer would happily spend by sacrificing the needs of his family as if he is gaining a huge reward in exchange for a few pennies – they would writhe in anger. They would vent their emotions by censuring and disparaging such people.

The sentence “God made fun of them” is similar to what is said in verse 15 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The implication is that they make fun of the believers, while God makes fun of them by giving them more respite so that they do whatever they want to. He will then seize them from where they would not even expect.

اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَ
اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾[58]

This verse is a further manifestation of the directive of being stern with the hypocrites given earlier. The Prophet (sws) was an embodiment of affection and graciousness. In spite of all the mischief played by them, their salvation was dear to him like the rest of his followers. Just as he would seek God’s forgiveness for others, he would also do so for the hypocrites. But the latter became so hard-hearted that they were not prepared to accept people being well-wishers of Islam. In fact, they, as a rule, would discourage well-wishers. At this, the Almighty stopped him from seeking forgiveness for these callous people and that too with the intensity depicted in this verse. The word “seventy” is not meant in its literal sense; it connotes a large number. This style is very common in Arabic and in Urdu too.

The words “this is because they denied God and His Messenger” state the reason for this intensity. In other words, forgiveness is for those who believe in God and His

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58. Whether you ask forgiveness for them or not, even if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God is not going to forgive them. This is because they denied God and His Messenger and God does not guide those who breach promises.

Messenger; how can it for those who do not even believe in them. It should be kept in mind that this verse proclaims the lack in faith of those who not only claimed to have faith in God and His Messenger but would also offer the prayer to show off, as has been pointed out earlier. However, because of their misdeeds alluded to before God did not accept their claim to faith.

The guidance mentioned in "and God does not guide those who breach promises" is with reference to the objective and consequence. Readers may look up what I have written under verse 74 earlier.

Section VIII: (81-89)

These verses were revealed during the battle of Tabūk regarding the hypocrites who stayed back after fabricating excuses and were very happy at their deception. The context of these verses is very evident.

Text and Translation

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَكَرِهُوْٓا اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَالُوْا لَا تَنْفِرُوْا
فِي الْحَرِّ ؕ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا ؕ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا قَلِيْلًا وَّلْيَبْكُوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾
فَاِنْ رَّجَعَكَ اللّٰهُ اِلٰى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِلْخُرُوْجِ فَقُلْ لَّنْ تَخْرُجُوْا مَعِيَ اَبَدًا وَّلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوْا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ؕ اِنَّكُمْ
رَضِيْتُمْ بِالْقُعُوْدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْخٰلِفِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّاتَ اَبَدًا وَّلَا تَقُمْ عَلٰى قَبْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَاَوْلَادُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي
الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ وَاِذَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَجَاهِدُوْا مَعَ رَسُوْلِهِ اسْتَاْذَنَكَ اُولُوا الطَّوْلِ
مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوْا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَّعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ لٰكِنِ
الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ جٰهَدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرٰتُ ۫ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ
لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۸۹﴾

Those who had been left behind were very happy at being left behind from God and His Messenger, and they disliked that they wage *jihād* for the cause of God with their persons and their wealth. And they said: "Do not go out in this heat." Say: The fire of Hell is far hot. Would that they understood! Thus they should laugh less and shed more tears because of what they have been doing. So, if God takes you back to any of their groups and they seek permission from you to go out for *jihād*, say: You shall never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind. (81-83)

And when any of them dies, never offer his funeral prayer and never stand on his grave. They rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises. And do not give any importance to their wealth or children. God only intends to punish them through these in the life of this world and their souls depart in the state of disbelief. And when a *sūrah* is revealed: “Fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger,” then even those among them who are able to do so, come to you to ask for reprieve, and say: “Leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind.” They preferred to be with those women who stay behind. And their hearts were sealed; so, now they understand nothing. The Messenger of God and they too who accepted faith with him, however, have waged *jihād* with their persons and wealth. And it is they for whom there are favours and blessings and it is they who shall succeed. God has prepared for them orchards beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. This alone is supreme success. (84-89)

Explanation

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلٰفَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَكَرِهُوْٓا اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَالُوْا لَا تَنْفِرُوْا فِي الْحَرِّ ۭ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا ۭ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾[59]

The word مُخَلَّف means “he who is left behind.” From this meaning, the word مُخَلَّفُوْنَ is used to connote those who had evaded the campaign of Tabūk by presenting false excuses. By using this word for them, the Qur’ān has explained their real status: outwardly, they had come to the Prophet (sws) to excuse themselves; however, in reality, they are those who were left behind and ignored. The Prophet (sws) of God knowing full well that their excuses were baseless accepted them because it was better that such miscreants stay back. If they go out for war, who knows what mischief they will spread.

The word خلاف is used in two meanings in the Qur’ān. One of its meanings is “in converse order” as in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah: أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ.[60] The second is “after” as in verse 76 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl: وَاِذًا لَّا يَلْبَثُوْنَ خِلٰفَكَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا.[61]

Here it occurs in its second meaning. The fact is that if they have succeeded in their ploy, it is nothing good for them; it is in fact going to produce evil consequences for them. The goat or sheep that is left behind its herd or shepherd can become an easy prey for Satan who goes after it like a wolf.

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[59] Those who had been left behind were very happy at being left behind from God and His Messenger, and they disliked that they wage *jihād* for the cause of God with their persons and their wealth. And they said: “Do not go out in this heat.” Say: The fire of Hell is far hot. Would that they understood!

[60] “Or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides.”

[61] “They to will not be able to stay back for long after you.”

The words “and they disliked that they wage *jihād*” is the opposite of what is said at the beginning of the verse. In other words, what should have made them happy was disliked by them and vice versa.

The last part of the verse shows that they even tried to convince others to not go out for war by scaring them of the hot weather at hand. It is known that the Muslim army marched to Tabūk in the hot summer. However, little do they know that the sizzling of Hell will be far greater than the climate they may face here.

فَلْيَضْحَكُوْا قَلِيْلًا وَّلْيَبْكُوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[62]

The verse implies that if these people will jump into the fire of Hell while escaping the heat of the weather, then in lieu of their deeds, they should cry more and laugh less. The previous verse says that these people have become devoid of insight. For this reason, they are happy at their misfortune, as if they have achieved a great feat. Generally our exegetes have taken this statement of regret as a statement of information. I do not agree with this interpretation. Here both the deed and its fate have been made evident. This is because a person who has insight can see his fate in the mirror of his deeds done in this world and is affected by it the way he should be. Yet, the blind and deaf are deprived of this.

فَاِنْ رَّجَعَكَ اللّٰهُ اِلٰى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِلْخُرُوْجِ فَقُلْ لَّنْ تَخْرُجُوْا مَعِىَ اَبَدًا وَّلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوْا مَعِىَ عَدُوًّا ۗ اِنَّكُمْ
رَضِيْتُمْ بِالْقُعُوْدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوْا مَعَ الْخٰلِفِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾[63]

The verb رجع is used both transitively and intransitively. The style of this verse shows that these verses were revealed during the journey to Tabūk. Thus the words “God takes you back” clearly imply: “He takes you back from this journey.”

The second thing which this verse indicates is that due to the misdeeds of the hypocrites stated above, the Prophet (sws) had developed abhorrence and hate for them. So much so, he did not even want to look at them. This disgust of the Prophet (sws) was right in line with the directive of God. For this reason, it is stated here that even though these people are not worthy of being looked at, the Prophet (sws) should sternly turn down any request they may make for participation in any future war

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62. Thus they should laugh less and shed more tears because of what they have been doing.

63. So, if God takes you back to any of their groups and they seek permission from you to go out for *jihād*, say: You shall never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind.

campaign in case God makes him meet any of their groups in his return journey. They will make their request to hide their shame and to show that they are still loyal. This is in fact an explanation of an aspect of the directive mentioned in verse 74 in which the Prophet (sws) has been asked to deal firmly with them.

The third indication in it is about the notion which the hypocrites housed in their hearts: they reckoned that since this time the Muslim army will be facing a strong Roman army, it will not return home. It is deference to this that the verse says that if God, contrary to this notion of the hypocrites, makes the Prophet (sws) meet any of their groups. The hypocrites were guilty of such a notion at the time of Ḥudaybiyah too. Verse 12 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ refers to it in the following words: بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا (in fact, you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people).

Consider the words "Say: You shall never go out with me nor shall you fight alongside me with any enemy. You preferred to sit earlier; so, now also sit with them who were left behind." They ask the Prophet (sws) to disallow the hypocrites from participating in the greatest collective responsibility. The purpose is to humiliate them and expose them. Hitherto they had been part of the Muslims on the bases of various excuses and pretexts. Until then, they would try to ask for exemption from *jihād*; now, the Prophet (sws) is asked to not permit them for this endeavour if they ask to. This is because they had been admonished much earlier, as is indicated by verse 15 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. This style can be both to negate an urge and to prohibit. In my opinion, in the Sūrah Fatḥ verse the former is the case, while in the verse under discussion, the latter is the case.

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّاتَ اَبَدًا وَّلَا تَقُمْ عَلٰى قَبْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾[64]

Here another harsh and in fact the final step is stated to expel the hypocrites from the Muslim collectivity. Earlier in verse 80, the Prophet (sws) has already been asked to not pray for their forgiveness. The current verse takes a step ahead. It is as if both in their life and death, Muslims have been asked to sever their relations from them. The last link of a person has with his collectivity is that after his death, his fraternity buries him and he goes away to his creator with the provision of their supplications. This prohibition now cut off this last link with them too.

Consider the last sentence: "they rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises." The word فسق means "to break promises" and "to rebel." In other words, if these people lay claim to faith and also observe religious rituals just to put up a show, they have broken the covenant they had made with God and His Messenger. The indication is to their misdeeds alluded to earlier.

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64. And when any of them dies, never offer his funeral prayer and never stand on his grave. They rejected God and His Messenger and died while breaching promises.

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَاَوْلَادُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾[65]

This verse has been explained earlier in the *sūrah* under verse 55.

وَاِذَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَجَاهِدُوْا مَعَ رَسُوْلِهِ اسْتَاْذَنَكَ اُولُوا الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوْا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَّعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾[66]

Just as the word قرآن or كتاب is used at some instances for a part of the Qur'ān or to a directive mentioned in it, the word سورة (*sūrah*) is also used for some section of it and not as a term.

In "fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger," the word "faith" is used in its complete meaning. This implies that they should go out for *jihād* with God's Messenger to bear witness to their faith in God.

The word طول means "capability" and "affluence." Verse 86 says that when they are asked to wage war for the cause of God, they prove spineless in their claim to faith. Even the healthy among them and those who have wealth and the provision of weapons – what to speak of the poor – come to the Prophet (sws) with fabricated excuses.

In my opinion, the words "leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind" express their mental feeling. At some instances in the Qur'ān, a statement of the Jews is cited: سمعنا و عصينا (We listened and We disobeyed) even though they actually said: سمعنا و أطعنا (We listened and obeyed). However, since the former was their heart's call, the Qur'ān stated the testimony of their hearts as words uttered from their tongues. It is as if they did not say سمعنا و أطعنا (We listened and obeyed); they actually said: سمعنا و عصينا (We listened and We disobeyed).

In a similar way, these hypocrites presented some excuses and compulsions. The reality was that they were cowards and wanted an easy sailing. Instead of going out with the combatants, they wanted to stay back with the women, the handicapped and the disabled. It is their excuses which the Qur'ān has alluded to in the form of their words. This has produced a subtle sarcasm, examples of which can be seen at other instances in the Qur'ān too.

The word خَوَالِف is used for women because men go out for war and other chores from their houses, while they look after the children and the houses by staying back.

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[65] And do not give any importance to their wealth or children. God only intends to punish them through these in the life of this world and their souls depart in the state of disbelief.

[66] And when a *sūrah* is revealed: "Fulfil your obligation to faith in God and wage *jihād* alongside His messenger," then even those among them who are able to do so, come to you to ask for reprieve, and say: "Leave us! We shall stay with those who stay behind." They preferred to be with those women who stay behind. And their hearts were sealed; so, now they understand nothing.

The hearts of the hypocrites were sealed as a result of this attitude they had adopted.

لٰكِنِ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ جٰهَدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرٰتُ ۫ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اَعَدَّ
اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۸۹﴾[67]

These verses depict the fate of true and staunch believers. The purpose is to praise the sincere among them and also to stir the honour of these hypocrites: the true companions of the Prophet (sws) do not present excuses like these hypocrites do when they are asked to prepare for war; on the contrary, they wage war through their persons and their wealth.

Section IX: (90-99)

In the earlier verses, the hypocrites living in the city were discussed. They inhabited Madīnah and its suburbs. Coming up is the mention of the hypocrites living in the rural areas and villages. Both had the same type of ailments and the directive stated is also the same for both. In this regard, a list of the actual handicapped is also mentioned so that there is no ambiguity between those who were only presenting themselves as handicapped and the actual ones. Since this was a decisive verdict about the hypocrites and it was feared that the innocent too might wrongly be dragged into it, it was essential to draw a clear line between the two.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَجَآءَ الْمُعَذِّرُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۰﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَآءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ
حَرَجٌ اِذَا نَصَحُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹۱﴾ وَّلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا
مَآ اَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَآ اَجِدُ مَآ اَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۪ تَوَلَّوْا وَّاَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا

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[67] The Messenger of God and they too who accepted faith with him, however, have waged *jihād* with their persons and wealth. And it is they for whom there are favours and blessings and it is they who shall succeed. God has prepared for them orchards beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. This alone is supreme success.

يَجِدُوْا مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ؕ﴿٩٢﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ وَ هُمْ اَغْنِيَآءُ ۚ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ
الْخَوَالِفِ ۙ وَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يَعْتَذِرُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمْ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قُلْ لَّا
تَعْتَذِرُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّاَنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ اَخْبَارِكُمْ ؕ وَ سَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ
الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوْا
عَنْهُمْ ؕ فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ۫ وَّ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ
لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ اَلْاَعْرَابُ اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّ نِفَاقًا
وَّ اَجْدَرُ اَلَّا يَعْلَمُوْا حُدُوْدَ مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مَا
يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّ يَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ
يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبٰتٍ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ صَلَوٰتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ
سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

And from among the villagers too came people guilty of making excuses that they too be exempted, and those who lied to God and His Messenger stayed back. A painful torment will seize those among them who disbelieved. (90)

There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: “I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance,” they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. Only they are to blame who seek reprieve from you even though they are wealthy. They were satisfied to remain with those women who stay in their homes, and God sealed their hearts. Thus they became deprived of knowledge. (91-93)

When you people return to them, they will present excuses before you. Say: Do not make excuses; we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances. Now God and His Messenger will observe your deeds. Then you will be brought before Him who knows what is open and what is hidden, and He will inform you of all your misdeeds. On your return, these people will swear before you oaths by God that you forgive them. So, just ignore them. They are filth in entirety, and Hell is their abode because of their misdeeds. They will swear in front of you to become pleased with them. Even if you become pleased with them, God will not be pleased with these people who break promises. These villagers are stronger in their disbelief and hypocrisy and are more worthy that they be unaware of the bounds of what God has revealed to His Messenger. And God knows everything and is very wise. (94-97)

And among these villagers, there are those also who regard spending in the way of God to be a penalty and wait for you a turn of fortune. Let bad fortune fall on them and God hears and knows all. And among them, there are those also who believe in God and in the last day and regard what they spend and the supplications of the Messenger as a means of procuring God's nearness. So, indeed, this is a means of nearness for them. God shall admit them into His mercy. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (98-99)

Explanation

وَجَآءَ الْمُعَذِّرُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۰﴾[68]

The word مُعَذِّرْ refers to a liar and to someone who concocts lame excuses to shirk responsibilities. The difference between مُعَذِّرْ and مُتَعَذِّرْ is that the excuse of the latter can be false and also true in some instances; however, the former always refers to a person who fabricates phony excuses.

The word أعراب is the plural of أعرابى and refers to villagers and Bedouins. Here it refers to those who dwelled in the suburbs and deserts of Madīnah. Being over-awed by the rising power of Islam, they had submitted to its political rule but faith had not actually entered their hearts. In the first place, it was not the spiritual part of Islam that had attracted them; it was more of its political might, as just referred to. Secondly, since they were far away from the centre, it was neither possible to make befitting arrangements for their education and instruction nor were they themselves prepared to give time to go to Madīnah for this purpose because of their pressing agricultural and animal husbandry needs. Those capable among them could have tried to reform and improve themselves if they wanted and could have gone to Madīnah on various occasions also to benefit from the company of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, the majority among them were those who knew Islam by name only and were totally unaware of its bounds and restrictions and were crude and uncouth. It was these people who later became apostates and in order to curb their mischief, Abū Bakr (rta) had to take bold measures.

The verse states that just as there were ones who came to the Prophet (sws) to excuse themselves and seek exemption, there were others who dishonoured their promise with God and His Messenger. They did not even take the pain to present any excuse and sat in their homes while completely ignoring the call to wage war.

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[68] And from among the villagers too came people guilty of making excuses that they too be exempted, and those who lied to God and His Messenger stayed back. A painful torment will seize those among them who disbelieved.

The word مِنۡهُمۡ (from them) in the last part of the verse is meant to show that there were some true and sincere believers in Islam among them too who took the initiative in showing sacrifice and selflessness – as is clarified ahead. For this reason, it is said that those who have committed disbelief by audaciously fabricating excuses for not fulfilling their obligations and remaining behind will be visited by a painful punishment. Only they are an exception to this who abided by their covenant with God and also those who were handicapped in reality.

لَیۡسَ عَلَی الضُّعَفَآءِ وَ لَا عَلَی الۡمَرۡضٰی وَ لَا عَلَی الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یَجِدُوۡنَ مَا یُنۡفِقُوۡنَ حَرَجٌ اِذَا نَصَحُوۡا لِلّٰہِ وَ رَسُوۡلِہٖ ؕ مَا عَلَی
الۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ سَبِیۡلٍ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿ۙ۹۱﴾ وَّ لَا عَلَی الَّذِیۡنَ اِذَا مَاۤ اَتَوۡکَ لِتَحۡمِلَہُمۡ قُلۡتَ لَاۤ اَجِدُ مَاۤ اَحۡمِلُکُمۡ
عَلَیۡہِ ۪ تَوَلَّوۡا وَّ اَعۡیُنُہُمۡ تَفِیۡضُ مِنَ الدَّمۡعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا یَجِدُوۡا مَا یُنۡفِقُوۡنَ ﴿ؕ۹۲﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِیۡلُ عَلَی الَّذِیۡنَ یَسۡتَاۡذِنُوۡنَکَ وَ
ہُمۡ اَغۡنِیَآءُ ۚ رَضُوۡا بِاَنۡ یَّکُوۡنُوۡا مَعَ الۡخَوَالِفِ ۙ وَ طَبَعَ اللّٰہُ عَلٰی قُلُوۡبِہِمۡ فَہُمۡ لَا یَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۹۳﴾[69]

These verses point out the difference between people who had genuine excuses and those who were just making lame excuses. The purpose was to expose the latter and secure the former from any blame of hypocrisy.

The condition mentioned is because there can be many sick and poor who can try to cause harm to Islam and to the Muslims whilst sitting in their homes through their conspiracies and connivances. Such people will not be absolved of the blame of staying back. Only those will be absolved of this blame who though are not able to reach the battlefield because of their weakness, ailment or poverty, yet wherever they are, try as far as they can to serve Islam and the Muslims. And if they are not able to do anything, then at least in their homes they sincerely pray for the victory of Islam and the Muslims and express grief at their own deprivation of being unable to participate in *jihād*.

Although, those mentioned by the words "and they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance" are already alluded to in verse 91, they are specially mentioned here so that their passion could be lauded. They were not ones who were hindered by poverty or by weakness of faith. On the one hand, there are people who sit back because they think that they are indigent and are without weapons, transport and provisions; thus they think that God has given them a legitimate excuse for staying back. On the other, there are those who do not want to be easily deprived of this blessed cause; they try their best to capitalize on this opportunity by finding options where these needs could be met. If they are not able to succeed in this effort, their deprivation makes them shed tears. In other words, this shows that even for the poor, the legitimate excuse is only in the case when every limb of their body evidences it.

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[69] There is no blame, however, on those who are weak and those who are sick and on those also who do not have the capacity to spend while they remain well-wishers of God and His Messenger. There is no blame on those who are thorough. And God is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. And they are also not to blame who when come to you so that arrangements can be made for their conveyance, you say: "I do not have any arrangement for your conveyance," they return with eyes shedding tears in sorrow that alas do not have the capacity to spend. Only they are to blame who seek reprieve from you even though they are wealthy. They were satisfied to remain with those women who stay in their homes, and God sealed their hearts. Thus they became deprived of knowledge.

يَعْتَذِرُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمْ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قُلْ لَّا تَعْتَذِرُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّاَنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ اَخْبَارِكُمْ ؕ وَ سَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَ
رَسُوْلُهٗ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾[70]

The word اعتذار here means "to make false excuses."

The invocative in "say: do not make excuses" is singular even though the address in the first section of the verse is plural. Similarly, in the later part "we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances" the pronouns "you" and "your" are in the plural. It is evident from this, that the hypocrites are responded through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) on behalf of all the believers. It is as if the tongue of the Prophet (sws) is the representative of all sincere believers. There is complete harmony and trust between him and his followers. The sarcasm on the hypocrites is also evident in this.

It is evident from the words "we shall not believe in anything you say; God has fully informed us of your circumstances" that the real reason because of which the excuses of the hypocrites were regarded as unacceptable was that God Himself had exposed them. He knows the hidden and the apparent. Since all others except the Prophet (sws) can never be in a position to know what is hidden, they can only form an opinion on the basis of the *sharī'ah* relying on outward circumstances. If there is no religious or intellectual basis to reject an excuse or claim, it will be accepted even it is totally baseless in reality. We shall accept every person who lays claim to faith as a Muslim if there is no religious ground to negate him even though he may be a strong hypocrite inwardly.

The remaining part of the verse implies that instead of hiding behind the shield of false excuses and oaths, they should bear witness to their uprightness through their deeds. God and His Messenger are observing their deeds and these baseless excuses will be of no benefit to them.

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[70] When you people return to them, they will present excuses before you. Say: Do not make excuses; we shall not believe in anything you say. God has fully informed us of your circumstances. Now God and His Messenger will observe your deeds. Then you will be brought before Him who knows what is open and what is hidden, and He will inform you of all your misdeeds.

سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ۭ فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ۡ وَّمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ جَزَاۗءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾[71]

In this verse, a single word إعراض mentioned adjacently occurs very eloquently in two different, in fact, opposite meanings. One of its meanings is "to turn one's face away from someone." Another of its meanings is "to accept the excuse of a person and forgive him and be happy with him." It is used in the second meaning at the first instance and in the first at the second.

يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾[72]

The words "they will swear in front of you to become pleased with them" explain the second meaning of إعراض referred to earlier. God will only be pleased with them when they repent and mend their affairs and make Him happy.

اَلْاَعْرَابُ اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّنِفَاقًا وَّاَجْدَرُ اَلَّا يَعْلَمُوْا حُدُوْدَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي رَسُوْلِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾[73]

This verse states why these villagers became so worthy of God's wrath that even if they are able to please the believers, God will never be pleased with them. Neither have they been able to spend time in the company of the Prophet (sws) and the companions nor did they try to become aware of the bound and limits of God's book. As a consequence, they were the worst affected by the onslaught of disbelief and hypocrisy. Had faith been dear to them, they would have remained in contact with the Prophet (sws) and the righteous and would have enhanced their own faith and knowledge. But they would always present the excuse of their wealth and family holding them back, as is mentioned in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ.

Further down in verse 122 of the current *sūrah*, their indifference to religion and to the centre of religion is referred to in these words: وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَاۗفَّةً ۭ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَاۗىِٕفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ.[74]

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71. On your return, these people will swear before you oaths by God that you forgive them. So, just ignore them. They are filth in entirety, and Hell is their abode because of their misdeeds.

72. They will swear in front of you to become pleased with them. Even if you become pleased with them, God will not be pleased with these people who break promises.

73. These villagers are stronger in their disbelief and hypocrisy and are more worthy that they be unaware of the bounds of what God has revealed to His Messenger. And God knows everything and is very wise.

74. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not

In other words, being villagers is not an excuse for them. If they belong to the villages, even then it was their responsibility to be diligent in their own education and instruction. However, on the contrary after claiming to profess Islam, they continued to nurture their disbelief and hypocrisy. Thus they were but worthy of the ignorance which nurtured in them. Since God is knowledgeable and wise, all His dealings are based on knowledge and wisdom. He does not force religion and its knowledge on anyone and gives to each what he proves worthy of.

وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۸﴾[75]

Since God hears and knows all, no secret is hidden from Him. Whatever He tells His creatures and in whatever way He will deal with them are based on these attributes.

وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبٰتٍ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَصَلَوٰتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ
سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۹۹﴾[76]

The word قربات is the plural of قربة. It refers to those deeds of piety and charity which bring a person closer to God.

This verse mentions the sincere and the righteous among the villagers.

Earlier in verse 80, the Prophet (sws) was stopped from seeking forgiveness and in verse 84 from offering funeral prayers for the hypocrites. However, the sincere among still enjoyed these benefits. It is for this reason that it is stated that they make their charity and the Prophet's supplications to be a means of nearness to God whereas the hypocrites are deprived of both these benefits.

The pronoun in اَلَآ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ is in the feminine singular, yet its antecedents are both the things mentioned earlier. Generally, our exegetes interpret this expression to mean that they make their charity to be a means of procuring the Prophet's supplication. However, I am reluctant to accept this interpretation. In order, to accept it, certain suppressions in the expression would be taken to be present for which there are no

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happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

[75] And among these villagers, there are those also who regard spending in the way of God to be a penalty and wait for you a turn of fortune. Let bad fortune fall on them and God hears and knows all.

[76] And among them, there are those also who believe in God and in the last day and regard what they spend and the supplications of the Messenger as a means of procuring God's nearness. So, indeed, this is a means of nearness for them. God shall admit them into His mercy. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

concomitant indications. Ustādh Farāhī also hold the same view as the one I have presented. I find it to be correct both with regard to language and to the coherence of the discourse.

Section IX: (100-112)

In the succeeding verses, first those who took the initiative in accepting Islam or those who sincerely followed them are lauded. These are the real building blocks of an Islamic society. God has given them glad tidings of being pleased with them and of a great success.

After that, the hypocrites of Madīnah and the villages are referred to and they are warned of punishment in all three instances: this world, Barzakh and the next world.

Obviously, it automatically emanates from this that they have no relationship with Islam and the Islamic society.

After that, those people are mentioned which this great *sūrah* had shaken and jolted and who, as a result, became anxious to confess their sins and seek forgiveness. They were then given glad tidings of acceptance of their repentance. The Prophet (sws) was thereupon given certain directives to reform and instruct them. The acceptance of repentance of some was deferred and they were told to wait for God's decision.

After that the issue of the Ḍarār mosque and its founders is taken up and verdict about them is delivered.

Next, the covenant between God and the believers is referred to and the qualities which they should profess as a consequence are explained. The purpose is expunge the Muslim society from unwanted elements of all types to restore it to its pristine form.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَ السّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَ الْاَنْصَارِ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۙ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَ رَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ
جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۱۰۰﴾ وَ مِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوْنَ ۛؕ وَ مِنْ
اَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ ۛؔ مَرَدُوْا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۫ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ وَ
اٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّ اٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ خُذْ
مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَ تُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَ صَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ صَلٰوتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْۤا
اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَ يَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ وَ قُلِ اعْمَلُوْا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ

عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰی عٰلِمِ الْغَیْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَیُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ
لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ اِمَّا یُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَاِمَّا یَتُوْبُ عَلَیْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِیْمٌ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ وَالَّذِیْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَّكُفْرًا وَّتَفْرِیْقًاۢ بَیْنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ وَاِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَیَحْلِفُنَّ اِنْ اَرَدْنَاۤ اِلَّا الْحُسْنٰی ؕ وَاللّٰهُ یَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ
﴿۱۰۷﴾ لَا تَقُمْ فِیْهِ اَبَدًا ؕ لَمَسْجِدٌ اُسِّسَ عَلَی التَّقْوٰی مِنْ اَوَّلِ یَوْمٍ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ فِیْهِ ؕ فِیْهِ رِجَالٌ یُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ یَّتَطَهَّرُوْا ؕ وَ
اللّٰهُ یُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾ اَفَمَنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْیَانَهٗ عَلٰی تَقْوٰی مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَیْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْیَانَهٗ عَلٰی شَفَا جُرُفٍ
هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهٖ فِیْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا یَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ لَا یَزَالُ بُنْیَانُهُمُ الَّذِیْ بَنَوْا رِیْبَةً فِیْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ
تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِیْمٌ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰی مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ؕ یُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِیْ
سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ فَیَقْتُلُوْنَ وَیُقْتَلُوْنَ ۫ وَعْدًا عَلَیْهِ حَقًّا فِی التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِیْلِ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ ؕ وَمَنْ اَوْفٰی بِعَهْدِهٖ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
فَاسْتَبْشِرُوْا بِبَیْعِكُمُ الَّذِیْ بَایَعْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِیْمُ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ
الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَالنَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾

And God was pleased with those Muhājirūn and Anṣār and they were pleased with Him who took the initiative the foremost, and then with those also who befittingly followed them. And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success. (100)

And there are hypocrites among the villagers who live around you and among the inhabitants of Madīnah also. They have become adept in their hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them. We shall punish them twice. Then they will be driven towards a great torment. (101)

And there are some others also who have confessed their sins. And they have earned both good and bad deeds. Hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them. God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all. Do they not know that it is God alone Who accepts the repentance of His servants and lauds their charity and that God is very inclined to accepting repentance and is Merciful? Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds. And soon you will be brought forth before Him who knows all the revealed and the concealed. He will inform you what you have been doing. (102-105)

And there are others also whose matter stands deferred until the verdict of God. He will either punish them or accept their repentance. And God knows everything. He is extremely wise. (106)

And those who have built a mosque to harm Islam, strengthen disbelief, cause a rift between the believers and to provide an ambush for people who before this have been engaged in war with God and His Messenger and they will swear: “We did this only to do good.” And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. You must never stand in it. Only that mosque is worthy that you stand in it whose foundation from the first day was based on piety. In it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity. Is that person better who based the foundation of his building on the fear of God and in pleasing Him or he who raised his building on the side of a hollow precipice that is about to fall; thus it fell with him in Hell? And God shall not guide the unjust. And this building which they have built will be rooted in their hearts on the basis of doubt except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise. (107-110)

Indeed, God has bought the persons and wealth of the believers in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of God; thus they slay and are slain. This is a true promise incumbent upon God in the Torah, in the Gospel and in the Qur’ān. And who can be truer in fulfilling his promise than God? So, rejoice on your deal that you have made with God. And this in reality is supreme success. Those who continue to repent, worship, are grateful, who strive, kneel and prostrate, enjoin good and forbid evil and protect the bounds of God are the true believers and give glad tidings to the believers. (111-112)

Explantion

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۙ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجْرِيْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾[77]

This verse mentions the real asset and treasure of an Islamic society. One purpose for this is to present them as an example for all the Muslims so that they should strive to follow them. The second purpose is to make evident to the hypocrites that they should now not try to remain part of this noble group. If they want to remain part of it, then they should adopt their ways otherwise get ready to meet their fate.

The verse lauds that vanguard of the Muslim community from among the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*; they were the ones who took the initiative to accept faith; it was a time when even one step towards it meant coming in harms way. Supporting the Prophet (sws) meant that they had taken on the might of all Arabia.

Those who occupy the second place after them though did respond to the call of the Prophet (sws) immediately, yet they followed in the footsteps of the first group with full sincerity and uprightness. In this regard, they did not let any pretension, expediency and vested-interest creep into them. Similarly, they were without any reluctance and hypocrisy. Once on their way, they did not think of turning back. They severed themselves from all those worthy of it and connected themselves to all those worthy of it. In fact, such was this union that the two became one. This sincerity, veracity and complete harmony between their inner and outerselves has been called *iḥsān* here. At another instance in this exegesis it has been explained that *iḥsān* means to do something in a thorough and befitting way. The verse states that God was pleased with them and they were pleased with God. God was pleased with them because they went to the ultimate extent in showing the patience, perseverance, valour and selflessness He expected from people for the cause of the truth. Similarly, they fully abided by the covenant they made with God in spite of all the hardships and opposition they had to encounter. Furthermore they perfected their abilities and potentials that God had placed in them and expended them in pleasing God alone. They never let Satan creep into this sincerity to God.

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[77] And God was pleased with those Muhājirūn and Anṣār and they were pleased with Him who took the initiative the foremost, and then with those also who befittingly followed them. And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success.

The meaning of they being pleased with God is that they regarded every dealing of God with them to be based on His justice, wisdom and mercy in every sense. If they faced some trial, they regarded it to be a remedy to some shortcoming they had. If they were confronted with a hardship, they regarded it to be a test of their patience and steadfastness. If good times befell them, they showed gratitude and if they were afflicted with sorrow, they showed perseverance and satisfaction. They never lost hope in any situation. Storms erupted, thunder lit up the heavens and lightning even struck their belongings to reduce them to ashes; yet nothing could disrupt their satisfied souls. They remain pleased with God and God remained pleased with them and this ultimately made them worthy of the glad tidings: فَادْخُلِيْ فِيْ عِبٰدِيْ. وَادْخُلِيْ جَنَّتِيْ (۸۹: ۲۹-۳۰) (enter among My servants and enter My Paradise, (89: 29-30)).

Consider next the portion: “And He has prepared for them orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide in them forever. This alone is great success.” This is the reward they will reap for being pleased with God.

وَ مِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوْنَ ۛ وَ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ ۛ مَرَدُوْا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۫ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ
سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيْمٍ ۚ ﴿۱۰۱﴾[78]

This verse earmarks the hypocrites. It is merely to achieve their own objectives that they have entered the Muslim faction. So adept are they in their hypocrisy that it is difficult for the Muslims to recognize them. Their hypocrisy is well grounded in them and they are Muslims outwardly only. This pretentiousness seems so real that they have been successful in deceiving the Muslims.

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[78] And there are hypocrites among the villagers who live around you and among the inhabitants of Madīnah also. They have become adept in their hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them. We shall punish them twice. Then they will be driven towards a great torment.

The words "you do not know them; We know them" admonish both the Muslims and these hypocrites. The former are warned to be very careful and cautious about these wolves in the garb of sheep and to be very vigilant; not every one can recognize their double-face. The latter are warned that however much they may change their garb, others can be deceived in recognizing them; but not God. He fully knows them and will make them reach their evil fate.

The words "We shall punish them twice" refer to the punishment they will receive at the hands of the Muslims as well as to the one they will encounter in Barzakh.

The fates of the believers and the hypocrites will be contrasting. Earlier it was said that the believers will achieve great success. Now it is said that for the hypocrites there is a painful punishment in the hereafter.

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ خُذْ
مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ صَلٰوتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا
اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠۴﴾ وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوْا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ
عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ع [79]

These verses mention weak Muslims and those who had shown weakness in the battle of Tabūk; however, they still had the spark of faith left in them. When this *sūrah* jolted and shook the hypocrites and these weak Muslims came to know about them, their eyes were opened. Instead of making excuses, they confessed their mistake and very anxiously consigned themselves to God and His Messenger. It is mentioned in historical reports that some of them even tied themselves with the columns of the Prophet's mosque and vowed not to eat or drink or leave that place unless they are forgiven by them. At times, God likes the shame and worry for repentance shown by a person more than his pious deeds. Thus God was pleased with their acknowledgement of sin and as is evident from the words "hopefully, God will bestow His favour on

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79. And there are some others also who have confessed their sins. And they have earned both good and bad deeds. Hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them. God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all. Do they not know that it is God alone Who accepts the repentance of His servants and lauds their charity and that God is very inclined to accepting repentance and is Merciful? Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds. And soon you will be brought forth before Him who knows all the revealed and the concealed. He will inform you what you have been doing.

them” they were given the hope that their repentance will be accepted.

The potency of the Qur’ānic words when it was revealed and their influence now can be clearly seen. The Qur’ān is the same and the worst forms of hypocrisy are present in us; however, hearts are no longer the same; no longer do they get influenced by what the Qur’an enjoins. Today we may find people who prefer to protest by remaining empty stomach in order to get a pay raise; but seldom will we find those who can stay up even one night to lament their sins.

The words “and they have earned both good and bad deeds” express what became a recommendation in their favour. It is stated that these people were not merely raised in hypocrisy; in fact, with vices, they also earned virtues. They did stumble while treading the path of piety; but not in the manner that they did not get up after falling down; they kept on rising after every fall. It was this behaviour which became the reason for their repentance and confession of sins. Hence they are not worthy of being shown indifference to; in fact, they deserve God’s favour and affection.

The words “hopefully, God will bestow His favour on them” give glad tidings of acceptance of mercy and of acceptance of their repentance; however, the style does not reflect certitude. The word “hopefully” shows that these glad tidings were conditional. Thus the words “tell them: carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds” of verse 105 points to this condition too. It is evident from this that though these people were forgiven but on the condition that they align all their future deeds with the pleasure of God, His Messenger and the believers. It shows that they will still remain under observation until they fully prove themselves of being trustworthy through their deeds.

Consider now the verse: “Accept the charity of their wealth so that you may cleanse them and purify them. And supplicate for them. Indeed, your supplication is a means of tranquillity for them. And God hears and knows all.” It has become fully evident from verses 53-54 that by this phase the Prophet (sws) had been asked to ignore the charity of the hypocrites. Thus he would even reject some charity. Similarly, in verse 84, he had been stopped to supplicate and seek forgiveness for them. However, those who had been forgiven among them became an exception to this prohibition and they were granted both these blessings

In the expression خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَ تُزَكِّيْهِمْ two words: *tazkiyah* and *taṭhīr* are mentioned. Their usage in the Qur’ān shows that the latter is mostly used to cleanse the apparent and hidden filth in a person and the former adds to this meaning another aspect: to develop and nurture abilities and to adorn one’s self with the virtues of morality.

One thing evident from the above expression is that the most effective remedy to the ailment of hypocrisy is spending in the way of God. The source of this ailment primarily is love of this world and it is this love that produces all those vices that can be comprehensively called hypocrisy. Spending in the way of God uproots this ailment. When it is uprooted, then on the one hand, vices become weak and on the other, virtues begin to be nurtured.

The second thing that is evident from this expression is that those who spend in the way of God do not do any favour to God and His Messenger. The real favour is actually shown to them by God and His Messenger by accepting this charity. This is because the cleansing and purity it produces in a person is not needed by God and His Messenger; it is needed by those who are invited to spend their charity.

The expression صَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ includes the funeral prayer besides general prayers and supplications. These forgiven people are allowed funeral prayers that had been forbidden for the hypocrites in verse 84.

The words “and God hears and knows all” sound assurance as well as warning.

Verse 103 addressed the Prophet (sws) and he was told that when these people have confessed their sins, he should once again train and instruct them; at the same time, he was guided to what could be the most effective way to train and instruct them. In verse 104, these people are directly urged and exhorted to seek repentance and spend in charity because God accepts repentance and charity and His attributes testify to this. Thus those who want to please God and procure His nearness should do these deeds held dear by God as much as possible. Also evident from this is that repentance and reforming one’s self is not a temporary task; it needs perpetuity.

Consider the words “Tell them: Carry out deeds; now God and His Messenger and the believers will observe your deeds.” They are meant to warn and admonish them.

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ اِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَاِمَّا يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾[80]

The word إرجاء means “to postpone or cancel a matter.”

There were some people who had sincerely repented for their sins but they had not been forgiven at that time and their matter had been deferred. In verse 118 ahead, they are referred to. From there it is evident that they were three people. Narratives mention their names as Ka‘b ibn Mālik, Hilāl ibn Umayyah and Murārah ibn al-Rabī‘. These individuals were not incriminated with hypocrisy. In fact, they had made sacrifices for Islam and even participated in all previous wars. However, at the instance of the Tabūk campaign, they showed weakness. For certain reasons to be referred to later, they were sternly punished than the rest. The attributes of God at the end of the verse imply that these people will be dealt with by God on the basis of His wisdom and knowledge.

A question arises here regarding the harshness shown to them, particularly when they had a flawless past. In my opinion, this can have several reasons.

The first reason could be that the anger shown to someone is commensurate with the trust and good-will that person has. If others had made mistakes, it was not something

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80. And there are others also whose matter stands deferred until the verdict of God. He will either punish them or accept their repentance. And God knows everything. He is extremely wise.

unexpected because of their weaknesses; however, the blemish committed by these three not only tarnished their flawless past but also damaged the trust and good-will the Prophet (sws) had in and for them.

The second reason could be that they did not fully realize their mistake because of the stature they had earned for what they had done for the cause of religion already. Thus the succeeding verse refers to it. Dilution in the feeling of shame for a mistake is against the real spirit of repentance. Thus, in order to train and instruct them, their repentance was deferred until the anxiety, worry and restlessness needed for the acceptance of forgiveness was stirred in them.

The third reason could be to strike a final blow on the hypocritical mentality, as I have referred to earlier. God preferred that the emotions against hypocrisy should awaken in the believers so much that they do not tolerate any of its type among them. For this purpose, stern accountability from those who, before their mistake, professed an unblemished character would have been the most effective. This incident must have also opened the eyes of the hypocrites. They would have realized that when such people could be punished what to speak of others. Other believers too must have understood the real criteria in religion on which every person must be prepared to be judged.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَّكُفْرًا وَّتَفْرِيْقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ
اِنْ اَرَدْنَاۤ اِلَّا الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ لَا تَقُمْ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ؕ لَمَسْجِدٌ اُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوٰى مِنْ اَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ
اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ فِيْهِ ؕ فِيْهِ رِجَالٌ يُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾ [81]

This is a mention of the most mischievous faction of the hypocrites. There were two mosques already present in Madīnah. One of them was the Qubā mosque situated in the suburbs and other was the Prophet's mosque located in the city. However, to carry out their malicious motives, they built another mosque. It was built to provide them with a den to hatch conspiracies against Islam and the Muslims. They named it as a mosque to falsely impress the Prophet (sws) and the believers with their religiosity and at the same time achieve their purpose. In order to make it popular, they even tried to make the Prophet (sws) pray in it once so that it too earns the same sanctity in the eyes of people as that of the Qubā mosque. However, the Prophet (sws) fully understood their motives and tried to put them off. But, when these verses were revealed, he not only did not pray in it, he also had it razed to ground upon his return

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81. And those who have built a mosque to harm Islam, strengthen disbelief, cause a rift between the believers and to provide an ambush for people who before this have been engaged in war with God and His Messenger and they will swear: "We did this only to do good." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. You must never stand in it. Only that mosque is worthy that you stand in it whose foundation from the first day was based on piety. In it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity.

from Tabūk.

These verses expose the evil motives for which this alleged mosque was built.

The first of these motives was that it was built to harm Islam and the believers. A mosque is a place of prayer and religious rituals. But this was a trap laid out to attract the believers and then gradually inject the poison of hypocrisy in them.

The second motive was disbelief. In other words, to nurture and nourish the disbelief that had found its way in them. A mosque is a workshop of faith but this alleged mosque was meant to serve disbelief.

The third motive was to create rift and dissension between Muslims. In Islam, it is the mosque which binds people and organizes them as a unit. These hypocrites wanted to first attract them to a mosque and then cause disruption in their ranks.

The fourth motive was to provide a place in which they could lie in ambush. It has been referred to earlier that all these hypocrites had their sympathies with factions warring against Islam. They desired them to succeed and were actually their agents among the Muslims. At this instance, they thought of building a mosque to hide their subversive activities and to also provide a den for themselves to carry out their evil motives.

The Prophet (sws) was then told that these hypocrites would repeatedly swear that their intentions in building this mosque were based on sincerity. They would contend that it was built for the benefit and use of the believers; they wanted to increase worship places so that people who could not go to the Qubā mosque in the dark of night or in cold weather or in rain would be not deprived of the reward of congregational prayers.

The expression وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ connotes swearing an oath.

An ambiguity in this verse is that the *khabar* (enunciative) is not mentioned in it. Exegetes have generally interpreted it to mean these hypocrites who made this mosque are from among the hypocrites that have mentioned earlier. However, this interpretation only solves the coordination of this verse with the previous one; the issue of the enunciative still remains. In my opinion, the enunciative is suppressed here. It is known that in the Arabic language at instances of intense anger the enunciative is suppressed. It is as if the furious tone of the speaker is a substitute for the enunciative.

The hypocrites did not succeed in bringing forth the Prophet (sws) to pray in this mosque and hence their nefarious designs never succeeded. He was stopped in standing in it. The sternness found in the tone in “you must never stand in it” is directed to the hypocrites and not the Prophet (sws).

In “whose foundation from the first day was based on piety” the reference is to the Qubā mosque because the Ḍarār mosque had been built to counter it. The hypocrites wanted to undo the status of this mosque but the Almighty made it an abiding place by praising it and those who offered prayers in it. The words used are “in it are people who like purity, and God likes those who like purity.” This praise is also a slant on the mischief-mongers of the Ḍarār mosque. In other words, they are ones whose both inner and outer selves are impure. Since they are worthy of God’s wrath, the Prophet (sws) should have no link with this alleged mosque.

It may be noted that the superlative in the Arabic language and in the Qur’ān is also used without any comparison. Same is the case here in: اَحَقُّ.

It is also evident from this verse that the real foundations of a mosque are laid in the hearts of people who build it and not on the land. If its founders have piety in their hearts and they base the foundations of the mosque on piety as well, then it is worthy of being called a mosque. If hearts have mischief in them, then such a place cannot be called a mosque; it is a place of idol-worship which will lead its founders and worshippers to Hell one day, as will be evident from the next verse.

اَفَمَنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهٗ عَلٰى تَقْوٰى مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ اَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهٗ عَلٰى شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهٖ فِىْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾[82]

The word شَفَا refers to the edge or side of something.

In rivers, canals and valleys, sometimes the force of water takes away with itself mud that lies below the edges. This hollow and unstable precipice is called جرف.

The expression هارالبناء means a building is about to fall after being rent apart. The *ism al-fā‘il* from this verb is both هائر and هارٍ. It is the same as شائك السلاح and شاكی السلاح, both of which are *ism al-fā‘ils.*

This verse depicts a parable of those who base their deeds on some evil motive instead of basing them on piety and pleasing God.

The guidance referred to in the last part is with reference to the purpose and consequence.

لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِىْ بَنَوْا رِيْبَةً فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾[83]

The verse employs the literary instrument of *ta‘līq bi al-muḥāl*, which means expressing the impossibility of something happening. It is evident from this that every deed has different effects. In general, all deeds done because of hypocrisy have poisonous effects but it becomes impossible to sever one’s self from the consequences of a deed as building the Ḍarār mosque. It is like blood flowing in body.

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[82] Is that person better who based the foundation of his building on the fear of God and in pleasing Him or he who raised his building on the side of a hollow precipice that is about to fall; thus it fell with him in Hell? And God shall not guide the unjust.

[83] And this building which they have built will be rooted in their hearts on the basis of doubt except if their hearts shatter to pieces. God knows everything; He is very wise.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ؕ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِیْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقْتُلُوْنَ وَ يُقْتَلُوْنَ ۟ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِی التَّوْرٰىةِ

وَ الْاِنْجِيْلِ وَ الْقُرْاٰنِ ؕ وَ مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوْا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِیْ بَايَعْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۱۱۱﴾[84]

This verse explains the essence of the pledge sworn on the hands of the Prophet (sws) in which every believer acknowledges that there is no god by God and that Muḥammad is His messenger. The purpose is delineate the consequences of this pledge so that every person can decide for himself the right course and the wrong one that is based on hypocrisy and disbelief.

The greatest status that human beings enjoy is that in spite of being God's creatures they have entered into a contract of sale and purchase with their creator. In accordance with this contract, God Himself takes a certain responsibility on Himself just as He imposes certain responsibilities on them. It is obvious that this stature of human beings is because God has given them the choice of free-will in certain spheres and desired that human beings out of their own willingness let God have a right in their wealth and persons and then earn the eternal abode of Paradise because of it.

Here is how this contract is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy: 6:4-5)
>
> And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew, 19:29)

In the Gospel the words "Kingdom of Heaven" are used for Paradise. The translators of the Torah changed all rewards of the hereafter to rewards of this world because of their greed for this world. However, in the teachings of the prophets, there is a copious mention of eternal rewards given in an eternal life.

The verse urges the believers to consign to God what they have pledged and be prepared to receive what God has pledged to them. Grand is God's Paradise. It is not an unprofitable deal. It is eternal life in exchange of a few days of this worldly life.

اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ النَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ الْحٰفِظُوْنَ

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[84] Indeed, God has bought the persons and wealth of the believers in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of God; thus they slay and are slain. This is a true promise incumbent upon God in the Torah, in the Gospel and in the Qur'ān. And who can be truer in fulfilling his promise than God? So, rejoice on your deal that you have made with God. And this in reality is supreme success.

لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾[85]

Just as in the previous verse, the enunciative (*khabar*) was suppressed, in this verse too it is suppressed. Al-Zujāj also hold this opinion and I regard it to be strongly grounded. On certain occasions, the stress in a sentence points to the enunciative even though it is not expressed in words. Here, exactly same is the case. The occasion shows that those who have these traits are true believers and the Prophet (sws) should give glad tidings to such believers.

All the words that occur in this verse have been explained at different instances in this exegesis except the word السّٰٓىِٕحُوْنَ. I did face a lot if difficulty in translating it. Its conventional meaning is "to walk about in the land." It is used precisely in this meaning in verse 2 of this very *sūrah* thus: فَسِيْحُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ.[86] However, the context of this verse clearly shows that its literal meaning is not implied here. It occurs as a term. The word سیاحت (*siyāḥah*)is a term of religious people since ancient times and it is translated by Ibn Manẓūt thus: الذهاب فى الارض للعبادة والترهب (to go to some place for the purpose of worship and for striving for the cause of religion).[87] Before the advent of Islam, a special importane with regard to worship was given to a person leaving his wife and children and the humdrum of life and seeking refuge in forest, deserts and isolated places. The purpose was to use all his time to meditate, worship and do various religiously motivated exercises. At the same time, the person was required to eat only as much as was needed to survive. He was to live on wild fruits and fountains found at these places. This has been the most liked way of worship among Chrisitian and Buddhist monks amd Hindu Yogis. If these people would meet people, it was more on the pattern of nomadic expeditions, moving from place to another. They would urge people to piety and virtue wherever they would temporarily stay and then move on to another place. It was to such a life of asceticism that the word سیاحت was a used as a term.

The extent of this سیاحت which was part of monasticism has been prohibited in Islam because it is a religion based on human nature and monasticism is against human nature. The part of it that relates to trusting God, remembering Him, devoting one's self to Him, exerting one's self to find the truth, seeking knowedge, disseminating religion and striving for the cause of religion is also desirable in Islam. These have been made parts of the fast, the *i'tikāf*, *'umrah*, *ḥajj* and *jihād* by it. For this reason, it contains both positive and negative things about سیاحت. On the one hand, it is stated: لاسياحة فى الإسلام (there is no *siyāḥah* in Islam)[88] and on the other, it is said: سياحة هذه الامة الصيام ولزوم المساجد (the *siyāḥah* of this *ummah* is its adherence to the fast and to mosques).[89] It is narrated by Abū Dā'ūd that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and sought permission to participate in *jihād*. At this, he is said to have replied: سياحة أمتى الجهاد فى سبيل الله (The *siyāḥah* of my *ummah* is waging *jihād* for the cause of God).[90] It is evident from these details that the real objective of *siyāḥah* is found in Islam as well. Thus, the fast, *i'tikāf*, *hijrah*, *jihād* and traveling for preaching and gaining knowledge are included in its meaning. Just as this *siyāḥah* is for men, it is also for women, which is evident from the word سائحات. However, women would be expemted in these practices where Islam has exempted them. For example, participating in war.

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[85] Those who continue to repent, worship, are grateful, who strive, kneel and prostrate, enjoin good and forbid evil and protect the bounds of God are the true believers and give glad tidings to the believers.

[86] So, walk about now in this land for four months.

[87] Ibn Manẓū, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 2, 492.

Our exegetes have generally translated the word *siyāḥah* as "those who fast" or "those who move about for the cause of God" or "those show disinterest in worldly affairs." However, these translations only bring forth one aspect of this word. The translation "to strive" which I have adopted may not do full justice to the word and I am also not fully satisfied with it, but I do think that it is closer to its essenec and covers not all but most of its meanings.

In the earlier verse, the essence of making a pledge with religion was depicted. Now in this verse, the real character of the believers is being highlighted. The purpose is place a mirror in front of the hypocrites so that if they want they can reform themselves by looking into it.

Of the various components of the character of believers that are mentioned here, the first one is penitence. It means "turning to God." The first step that a person should do in worshipping and obeying God is that instead of wandering about in satanic ways he turns to his Lord and shows determination in treading the straight path. It is this penitence that gets hold of him in every task. Whenever he deviates from the straight path, it is penitence that comes to his rescue and sets him back on the straight path.

After penitence, worship is mentioned. It is the greatest right of God imposed on the person who turns towards God. And since there is no one else except God Who has this right, hence no one else should have a share in this worship nor in obedience because obedience is a natural requisite of worship.

After worship, gratitude is mentioned because it is the essence of all forms of worship. This is precisely why rituals like the prayer and the *zakāh* are manifestations of gratitude to God and an acknowledgement of His favours. If the sentiments of gratitude and acknowledgement of favours are not deeply engendered in a person, he is not able to befittingly worship God nor is His worship braced with its true spirit.

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88. Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Jawzī, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1405 AH), 512.

89. Ibn Manẓū, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 2, 493.

90. Abu Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 5, (no, 2486).

After this, *siyāḥah* is mentioned. It has already been explained above. It is a comprehensive expression of all efforts, exercises and struggles which a person undertakes to reform his inner and outer self, to understand and teach religion and to disseminate and spread it with fervour and altruism and for whose cause he sacrifices the pleasures and comforts of his life without any hesitation.

After that, the prayer is mentioned. The expression used to refer to it is الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ. Wherever the prayer is mentioned in this manner in the Qur'ān, it does not merely refer to the obligatory prayer. It also alludes to the ones offered in seclusion. It is these prayers which protect all the attributes mentioned earlier and it is they who enliven and nurture the exertion for the cause of God called *sayāḥah* by the Qur'ān.

After this, forbidding from evil and urging towards virtue is mentioned. The attributes stated earlier refer to individual reform. Now the collective conduct of people is clarified: they enjoin virtue and forbid vice. They are not unconcerned with the right and wrong of others and in fact have great concern in them to reform others, and according to their capacity try to set right wrongs.

At the end, the bounds of God are mentioned. This in fact is an expression of piety. This is a reference to an attribute which is the most comprehensive: in other words, these people remain very vigilant in every phase of life to abide by the bounds set by God and not to cross them. Neither do they themsleves dare to break any limit nor, as far as they are can, permit others to do so.

As pointed out earlier, the reasn that these traits of the believers are mentioned here is that the picture of true believers comes before the hypocrites: it is such people who have these traits and not every claimant to faith whose character and deeds are the entire opposite but they want their names to be written in the register of the believers.

Section X: (113-129)

This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. Muslims are directly addressed in it. After cleansing their faction from all evil elements, here at the end they are being given some directives and glad tidings.

It is first said that it is not befitting for the Prophet (sws) or the believers to seek forgiveness from God for the idolaters, even if they are blood relatives. In this regard, the nature of the forgiveness sought by Abraham (sws) for his father is clarified so that it may not create any misconception. The purpose of this directive is to cleanse the believers from every speck of evil and prepare them to live and die for the mission of the truth only. If some other inclination than the truth enters a person even to a miniscule extent, it opens the door to hypocrisy and disbelief. For this reason, this door has been tightly shut.

After this, all the believers are given glad tidings of acceptance of their repentance, who, after the warnings mentioned in the *sūrah*, were anxious to rectify their weaknesses and were diligently seeking forgiveness for them.

After this, the repenters of the people of Madīnah and the Bedouins are urged to always remain in the company of the truthful and the sincere. Their company will be an antidote to their weaknesses. Moreover, they should bear in mind the great favour which God has promised to reward them with in exchange of every small and big virtue done for His cause. Further, the factions living in the deserts are advised to remain associated with the centre so that they can reap the blessings of the Prophet's company and also disseminate them to their own people.

Further ahead, the believers are told to wage war with the disbelievers around them and be stern with them. The fate of those who were still deeply involved in hypocrisy after all these warnings is indicated.

At the end, the believers are addressed and told how great a mercy and favour is the person of the Prophet (sws). They should sincerely value him. Those who evade this advice are told through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he does not care for anyone as God is sufficient for him; he has full trust in Him and He is the owner of the glorious throne.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْٓا اُولِيْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ
اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ اِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ اَنَّهٗ
عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًۢا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ
مَّا يَتَّقُوْنَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۭ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَي النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِيْ سَاعَةِ
الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ بِهِمْ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَّعَلَي الثَّلٰثَةِ
الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا ۭ حَتّٰٓي اِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنْ لَّا مَلْجَاَ مِنَ
اللّٰهِ اِلَّآ اِلَيْهِ ۭ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوْبُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١١٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
كُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾ مَا كَانَ لِاَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ اَنْ يَّتَخَلَّفُوْا عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا
يَرْغَبُوْا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيْبُهُمْ ظَمَاٌ وَّلَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَطَـُٔوْنَ
مَوْطِئًا يَّغِيْظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُوْنَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ

الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ۙ وَ لَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيْرَةً وَّ لَا كَبِيْرَةً وَّ لَا يَقْطَعُوْنَ وَادِيًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
اَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ وَ مَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً ؕ فَلَوْ لَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ
لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ وَ لِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوْۤا اِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا
الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَكُمْ مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَ لْيَجِدُوْا فِيْكُمْ غِلْظَةً ؕ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ وَ اِذَا مَاۤ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ
فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ اَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هٰذِهٖۤ اِيْمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَزَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّ هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾ وَ اَمَّا
الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا اِلٰى رِجْسِهِمْ وَ مَاتُوْا وَ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾ اَوَ لَا يَرَوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُوْنَ فِيْ
كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ وَ لَا هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾ وَ اِذَا مَاۤ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ هَلْ
يَرٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوْا ؕ صَرَفَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾ لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ
عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ ۖۗ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا
هُوَ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَ هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۱۲۹﴾

It is not befitting for the Prophet and the believers to pray for the forgiveness of the Idolaters, even if they are their relatives when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell. And Abraham had asked for the forgiveness of his father only because of the promise he had made with him. Then when it became evident to him that he is God’s enemy, he declared his acquittal from him. Indeed, Abraham was very kind-hearted and gracious. And this is not God’s practice that He lead astray a nation after guiding it until He clearly inform them of what they must refrain from. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things. It is God whose kingdom prevails in the heavens and the earth. Only He gives life and He alone gives death and except for God you neither have a friend nor a helper. (113-116)

God showed affection to the Prophet and to those among the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn who sided with the Prophet in times of difficulty after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation. Then God looked at them with affection. Indeed, He is very Affectionate, Ever-Merciful. And, He looked with affection on the three also whose matter had been deferred. Until when the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness and their souls suffered affliction and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him. Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful. (117-118)

Believers! Keep fearing God and be in the company of the truthful. It was not befitting for the Bedouins of Madīnah and those who lived nearby that they sit behind leaving God and His Messenger. Neither was it befitting for them to regard their own life to be dearer than his. This is because whatever thirst, fatigue and hunger they are afflicted with in the cause of God and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers and injury on an enemy, in exchange for all these one pious deed is written for them. God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough. And whatever small or large amount they spend in charity and whatever valley they traverse, all is written down for them so that God can best reward them for their deeds. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful? (119-122)

Believers! wage war against the disbelievers around you and let them find sternness in you. And you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits. And when a *sūrah* is revealed, there are some among them also who ask: "Whose faith among you has it increased?" So, those who have actually believed, it increases their faith and they receive glad tidings from it. As for those whose hearts have an ailment, it increases their filth with another filth and they die as disbelievers. Do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice? Even then, they do not repent or take heed? And when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: "Is there anyone watching?" Then they slip away. God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand. (123-127)

There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. It weighs down heavily on him if you suffer. He is desirous of your faith and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers. Thus if they turn away, say: God is sufficient for me. There is no deity except Him. I have trusted Him alone and He is the Lord of the glorious throne. (128-129)

Explanation

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْٓا اُولِيْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَ
مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ اِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ اَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَاَوَّاهٌ
حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾[91]

In the first verse, the believers are asked to refrain from a very hidden form of polytheism, which actually leads to hypocrisy through the back door: they should not pray for the forgiveness of those from whom the declaration of acquittal had been made after the truth had been conclusively communicated to them and even then did not accept faith. The reason for this is that such adversaries have become worthy of God's wrath. Praying for them because of being related or because of any other form of association would mean that one's affiliation with blood relationship has prevailed over one's affiliation with the truth. Here the word "idolaters" refers to the "idolaters of Arabia" from whom acquittal has been sounded in very blatant words at the beginning of the *sūrah* from God and His Messenger. A great weakness of the hypocrites was that they were not willing to sever ties of relationship and friendship from such idolaters. After severing all links with them, the believers were told that forgiveness should also not be sought for them. Earlier on, this same directive was given to the Prophet (sws) regarding die-hard hypocrites: he should neither seek God's forgiveness for them nor lead their funeral prayers. In the lives of God's Messengers, there comes a stage when they and the believers are stopped from even praying for the guidance and forgiveness of the disbelievers. In fact, a stage is also reached when words like رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا[92] are uttered by them. This is the time when God does not want the slightest of evil to remain attached to the believers so that they are protected from the punishment that is ordained for such evil elements. I have explained in Sūrah al-Anfāl that the prayers of a prophet and the believers provide security for their nation. Here by stopping the Prophet (sws) and the believers from these prayers, the idolaters have lost their last barrier of protection.

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[91] It is not befitting for the Prophet and the believers to pray for the forgiveness of the Idolaters, even if they are their relatives when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell. And Abraham had asked for the forgiveness of his father only because of the promise he had made with him. Then when it became evident to him that he is God's enemy, he declared his acquittal from him. Indeed, Abraham was very kind-hearted and gracious.

It is evident from the words "even if they are their relatives" any relationship of a person with the Prophet (sws) which is devoid of faith will not be of any benefit before God, let alone other ties and links.

It becomes evident from the words "when it has become evident to them that they are the companions of Hell" that for those about whom it is evident that they will end up in Hell, it is not permissible for the believers to pray for their forgiveness. However, this does not mean that praying for the guidance of a disbeliever has also been prohibited because God Himself has informed about the idolaters mentioned in this verse ending up in Hell. After the passing away of the last prophet, there is no certain way of finding out this information about any person that he will not accept guidance and thus end up in Hell. Thus there is nothing wrong in praying for the guidance of such people. However, if a person dies as a disbeliever, forgiveness should not be sought for him. This is because doing so would render faith as insignificant and negate God's law of justice, abstaining from which is essential for the believers.

The verse clarifies a misconception arising from Abraham's prayer of supplication for his father who was a disbeliever: he only fulfilled a promise he had made with father. Moreover, this promise was made at the time when Abraham (sws) was not fully informed that his father was in fact God’s enemy. As soon as he came to know of it, he announced his acquittal from him. It is evident from concomitant indications that it was God Himself Who informed Abraham (sws) of this once he had conclusively communicated the truth to him. God told him to leave his father to himself because he is not going to accept faith.

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[92] "O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land."

Abraham’s promise referred to here is mentioned at many instances in the Qur’ān. In Sūrah Maryam, the words are: قَالَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكَ ۚ سَاَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِيْ حَفِيًّا.[93]

This shows the utmost importance promises have. If a person makes a promise with someone, he must fulfil it as far as it is possible.

The word اَوَّاهٌ means someone who is very sympathetic and caring and حَلِيْمٌ means gracious and benevolent. Here these words praise Abraham (sws). The Almighty has expressed His likeness for his concern for his father. If the preceding and succeeding verses of the Sūrah Maryam verse quoted earlier are read, it is evident that at that time, A%dhar, his father had been very callous to him. However, the obedient son not only bore the anger of his father but very affectionately promised him to pray for his forgiveness. One can deliberate how tough the declaration of acquittal must have been for such a loving son. However, since for the sake of His love, God wants a person to be both hard and soft, Abraham (sws) highlighted both these aspects of his heart. This is the right example for all exponents of religion. Unless they are affectionate and kind, there is no use for them to undertake this task. Similarly, if they do not have an iron will and immense perseverance, they will not achieve anything.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًۢا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَّا يَتَّقُوْنَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾[94]

This verse can refer to the established practice of God that is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’ān that He leads astray people only after the truth has been conclusively communicated and made fully evident to them; hence such people do not deserve such sympathy. However, because of the words “after guiding it” my mind is very inclined to think that this verse is actually a warning to the believers: after the straight path has been evident to them, God has also made evident the dangers that travellers of this path may encounter; it is now their obligation to remain secure from them; if they do not, then the responsibility of going astray rests on them. God leaves such people to go astray. In other words, this directive further emphasizes the directive as per which the believers must not pray for the forgiveness of the idolaters. It has been explained earlier that any mental or spiritual attachment with those whose enmity with the truth is evident at times becomes a trial for a person. This attachment gradually increases so much that basic beliefs are forgotten and the blood and family relations prevail on them. Today those who in spite of being born Muslims raise the slogan “we are the progeny of the pharaohs” or feel proud of Rājā Dāhir instead of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim have succumbed to this trial.

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[93] Abraham said: “Peace be to you. I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. He is very Merciful to me.”

[94] And this is not God’s practice that He lead astray a nation after guiding it until He clearly inform them of what they must refrain from. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things.

The words “indeed, God has knowledge of all things” are part of this warning. They imply that God is aware of the outer and inner aspects of a person. Any inclination towards polytheism or disbelief will not remain hidden from Him.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيۡرٍ ﴿۱۱۶﴾[95]

This verse reflects monotheism and emphasizes what is said earlier. This purpose of this emphasis after emphasis is to cleanse even the smallest speck of polytheism from the believers.

لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِىِّ وَالۡمُهٰجِرِيۡنَ وَالۡاَنۡصَارِ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡهُ فِىۡ سَاعَةِ الۡعُسۡرَةِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيۡغُ قُلُوۡبُ فَرِيۡقٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِهِمۡ رَءُوۡفٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۱۷﴾[96]

The word تَابَ means “to turn to God.” However, when it is ascribed to God and is followed by the preposition عَلَى, its meaning encompasses mercy. Thus it would mean to look at someone with mercy or affection. The obvious consequence of this meaning is that God will accept the repentance of such a person.

This verse is proclaiming general glad tidings for those who mended their ways after hearing the warnings found in this *sūrah* and as such made themselves worthy of them. It has been pointed out earlier that this *sūrah* acted like a sieve to sift out the right elements from the evil ones in the society of those times. After this cleansing, all evil elements were expelled. Only they remained who were as pure as gold. Once God announced this general acceptance of repentance, if the heart of any person got contaminated temporarily with some sin, it was immediately washed away by the tears of his shame. God gave such people glad tidings of the acceptance of their repentance.

The first person mentioned in this list is Prophet Muḥammad (sws). This is became he was the most outstanding person of this pure society. If he is mentioned in this context, it does not mean that he was guilty of a mistake the way some others were. In fact, it actually refers to his mercy and magnanimity because of which he would forgive the hypocrites for their pranks. Verses like verse 43 of this *sūrah* point to this.[97] However, since prophets of God are a benchmark of truth and justice, God checks them on such blemishes and reforms them. These blemishes originate from the sentiments of well-wishing, but cross the bounds prescribed by God for his prophets and messengers.

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[95] It is God whose kingdom prevails in the heavens and the earth. Only He gives life and He alone gives death and except for God you neither have a friend nor a helper.

[96] God showed affection to the Prophet and to those among the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn who sided with the Prophet in times of difficulty after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation. Then God looked at them with affection. Indeed, He is very Affectionate, Ever-Merciful.

In the second position the *muhājirūn* and then the *anṣār* are mentioned. On the one hand, this signifies the rank and position found in an Islamic society: after the Prophet (sws) come the *muhājirūn* and then the *anṣār*. On the other hand, what is evident is the basis of this status and position: it is not lineage or tribe or wealth or status; its basis is obedience to the Prophet (sws) and service to religion. Those who are the most prominent with regard to this trait have the highest rank in an Islamic society regardless of their family and tribe and worldly assets.

The expression "in times of difficulty" primarily refers to the campaign of Tabūk. It is evident from history that it took place in very difficult circumstances. However, it also comprehensively refers to all those difficulties which the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* continued to encounter from the beginning right upto those times. This expression firstly delineates the fact that real faith is that of those who have succeeded in the trials of hardship. The second thing which is evident is that this attribute of the faith of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* made them worthy of God's affection and He accepted their repentance. God does not deprive His sincere and selfless servants from the urge to do good. When some weakness emanates from them, God instils in them the urge to repent after which they repent and God forgives them. God disregards only those who make claims with their tongues only but are not prepared to face any adversity.

The words "after the hearts of some among them had become inclined towards deviation" show that the vast majority of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* persevered on the truth in spite of all forms of hardships they were inflicted with. Only a small number of them showed weakness at the instance of Tabūk; they too after warning reformed themselves. Then they turned to God and their repentance was accepted by Him.

وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيۡنَ خُلِّفُوۡا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا ضَاقَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡاَرۡضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتۡ وَضَاقَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ وَظَنُّوۡۤا اَنۡ لَّا مَلۡجَاَ مِنَ
اللّٰهِ اِلَّاۤ اِلَيۡهِ ؕ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ لِيَتُوۡبُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ۝١١٨[98]

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[97] "May God forgive you. Why did you permit them until it would have become evident to you who the truthful are and you would have known the liars also."

[98] And, He looked with affection on the three also whose matter had been deferred. Until when

After glad tidings of general acceptance of repentance mentioned earlier, the case of three people deferred in verse 106, is now taken up.

The words “until when the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness” refer to the hardships these three faced. It is evident from historical reports that for fifty days these three were totally ignored by others; even their close relatives became distant, as they left these three to themselves. Their wives and children too became estranged from them. This happened while the city of Madīnah still bustled with activity; its blessings were still the same and the mutual love and affection which people had was as exemplary as ever. However, these three individuals had no one who sympathized or cared for them because they were condemned in the eyes of God and His Messenger. Vast is God’s earth for people provided they have magnanimity in their hearts. Yet when the doors of hearts close, this vastness is constricted and becomes a prison for a person. Such was the ordeal these three faced during this time. As mentioned earlier, this situation did not prevail for a few days; it went on for a whole fifty days.

Besides the constriction these people found in the external world, their inner selves too became choked and suffocated. At times, however much stagnation and compression may be found in the outer world, if a person’s heart is satisfied with his practices, the dreary outer world does not make him lose hope. He is able to find some place of refuge in his inner self. However, these people could not even show any patience for an instant in the wake of displeasure from God and His Messenger, let alone fifty days. What more can be sorrowful for people of faith than this? Such was their situation that they were more sick of their inner world than the outer one. Imagine the plight of those who do not have any hope in the world around them and their hearts too would not accept any assurance to appease them.

The words “and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him” precisely portray their inner feelings. The intensity with which these people were taken to task, with the same intensity did these people show urgency to turn to God thinking that when God is seizing them, they can only seek His refuge to save themselves. Thus it is evident from historical narratives that two of these three totally isolated themselves in seclusion. Day and night they would cry and plead and express shame and repentance. The third would at times go out but only because he might earn the affection of God and His Messenger. Had these people any germ of hypocrisy in them, they would have sought the refuge of someone when they had been discarded by God and His Messenger. On the contrary, these people were true in faith. Hence just like a child who in fear clings even more closely to his mother when she

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the earth closed in upon them in spite of its vastness and their souls suffered affliction and they came to know that there is no place of refuge from God except with Him. Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful.

scolds him, they ran to seek God’s refuge to save themselves from His wrath. They neither presented any false excuse nor connived with others. To one of them – Ka‘b ibn Mālik – the king of Ghassān sent a letter to him to give him refuge. He wrote that he had heard how their Prophet (sws) been cruel to him and that Ka‘b was someone whose life should be wasted like this. He expressed that if Ka‘b comes to him, he will be duly valued. But Ka‘b tore up this letter and had it burnt. This is because he had faith in the fact that only God’s mercy can save a person from His accountability. The king of Ghassān cannot save him. It is this belief which is the essence of faith and monotheism. If a person who is taken to task by God consigns himself to Him with this belief, then His mercy effervesces even more.

Consider next, the part: “Then God turned to them in affection so that they repent. Indeed, it is God Who is prone to accepting repentance and is Merciful.” God gave them the urge to repent once their hearts had become soft after they had borne the pangs of isolation. The verb لِيَتُوْبُوْا occurs in its complete sense. As for the confession of sins, these three too did so, as indicated earlier. However, at that time, their repentance had not been accepted. The reason, as referred before, was that these people had great confidence in the services rendered for religion. For this reason, neither did they realize the intensity of their mistake nor did the extent of regret and remorse they showed was befitting enough. The sincerity of every person cannot be measured by the same yardstick. Thus God made them pass through a tough trial so that they and through them others also get to know how much remorse is needed for repentance to be accepted by God.

The words “then God turned to them in affection so that they repent” clarify another fact: repentance basically begins from God. It is He Who creates the urge in His servants to repent. When a person repents, God again shows His affection to him and accepts his repentance. Such is the nature on which God has made a human being that if he has faith in it, his heart grieves at every sin he commits and with regret and remorse the feeling of turning to his Lord arises in him. If a person gets ready to act according to this feeling, the Almighty provides his heart and tongue with words that reflect these feelings and which are dear to Him. He then accepts these sentiments. Only those unfortunate people are deprived from it who are who have lulled their conscience to sleep and whose faith has become lifeless. Such people become heedless of God. The punishment they get for this is that God also becomes heedless of them. The anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah is a very revealing example in this regard. Readers may take a look at what we have written while explaining verse 37 of that *sūrah*.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٩﴾[99]

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[99] Believers! Keep fearing God and be in the company of the truthful.

After the beliefs and deeds of the believers are cleansed, now certain other guidelines are being to them. Following them would ensure that in future also they would be able to keep their deeds free from the adulteration of disbelief and hypocrisy.

This first guideline shows that company and companionship has a great role in the development or decadenee of a person's character. If a person lives in the company of disbelievers and hypcrites as well as the ignorant, even people havin strong personalities get influenced, let alone the weak ones. By the same token, if people having a weak character live in the company of people whose faith and deeds are on the right footing, they get inspired to overcome their weakness and gradually elevate themselves to the category of their influencers. It was because of this effect of companionship that people who were living in the abode of disbelief (*dār al-kufr*) were asked to migrate to the abode belief (*dār al-islām*). Similarly, Muslims who lived in the suburbs of Madīnah were asked to send groups from among them one after the other to the Madīnah for the purpose of training and instruction. In this way, they would remain connected to the Prophet (sws) and the companions. The circumstances in which the hypocrites and Bedouins lived have been referred to earlier. It is evident from them that their bad company played a very strong role in their spiritual and moral ailments. It is for this reason, that the verse emphasizes that the company of the truthful should be adopted. Fear of God is the protector a person's heart. It protects a person from inside. The company of the truthful reinforces a person from outside against the onslaughts of Satan. صّٰدِقِيْنَ translated as "truthful" are those in whose words and deeds, there exists complete harmony. In other words, it is the opposite of the word "hypocrite."

مَا كَانَ لِاَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ اَنْ يَّتَخَلَّفُوْا عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوْا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيْبُهُمْ ظَمَاٌ وَّلَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَطَـُٔوْنَ مَوْطِئًا يَّغِيْظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُوْنَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا اِلَّا
كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً وَّلَا يَقْطَعُوْنَ
وَادِيًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾[100]

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[100] It was not befitting for the Bedouins of Madīnah and those who lived nearby that they sit behind leaving God and His Messenger. Neither was it befitting for them to regard their own life to be dearer than his. This is because whatever thirst, fatigue and hunger they are afflicted with in the cause of God and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers and injury on an enemy, in exchange for all these one pious deed is written for them. God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough. And whatever small or large amount they spend in charity and whatever valley they traverse, all is written down for them so that God can best reward them for

These verses emphasize what is said earlier: weak Muslims are encouraged to spend time in the company of the truthful; every difficulty they suffer earns them reward from God. The implication is that when it is with such graciousness that God deals with His servants, then it is not befitting for the people of Madīnah and those living in its suburbs to show hesitancy in siding by God’s Messenger and give preferenec to their own lives over his. It is also not permissible for future too that a person seeing hardships and dangers leave the advocates of the truth and adopt the company of evil and evil doers.

The words “God will not waste the reward of those who are thorough” points to the condition necessary for the acceptance of deeds by God. “Thoroughness” implies that these deeds are done merely to please God and not anyone else in the slightest way.

The words “and whatever step they take to inflict sorrow on the disbelievers” refer to those measures which are meant to produce discouragement in the disbelievers; they make them sorrowful and this also creates the awe of the believers over them.

وَ مَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَآفَّةً ؕ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِی الدِّیْنِ وَ لِیُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوْۤا اِلَیْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾[101]

This verse also further emphasizes the need of companionship of the truthful. In verse 97, it is stated that the Bedouins have spent very little time with the Prophet (sws) and his companions. They are unaware of the bounds of the permissible and the impermissible. For this reason, they are an easy prey when attacked by disbelief and hypocrisy. This verse informs them of the antidote to this weakness. If it is not possible for all to leave their places and visit the Prophet (sws) and his companions, at least a few could have done so. The implication is that if until then, they fell short of this, they should now take up this duty and their groups should come to Madīnah one after the other. They should obtain sound understanding of religion and then go back and teach their people. In this way, the village-dwellers would be able to look after their houses and cattle and also get to benefit from the company of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. It is evident from historical reports that the companions had fixed turns to come to the Mosque of the Prophet (sws). Through this mutual cooperation they would be able to run their errands and also at the same time benefit from the gatherings of the Prophet (sws)

The expression used in the verse to get educated in religion is لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِی الدِّیْنِ. It means to obtain a sound understanding and insight of religion. The word used for instruction

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their deeds.

101. It was not possible that all Muslims should have undertaken this; but why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

is إنذار. It means “to warn” and “to caution” and to specially urge people to prepare for the hereafter. Both this expression and this word are used with reference to the purpose of of education. In Islam, the real purpose of education is to obtain sound insight of relgiion and educate and instruct others for sucess in the hereafter. All other things are secondary and are subservient to this objective.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَكُمْ مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوْا فِيْكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۭ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾[102]

This verse is a summary of the whole subject-matter of the *sūrah*. After conclusive communication of the truth to the Idolaters and the People of the Book, it procalims acquittal from them. It has become evident from verses 23-24 that the hypocrites were not prepared to wage war against the neighbouring Idolaters and People of the Book because of being related to them; they also had friendly ties and common business interests with them. They were not prepared to break these links with them. After exposing them and after explaining the requisites of true faith, piety and righteousness, the real demand of faith is once again put forth before them in this verse. Though the address is general, concomitant indications show that the words are directed towards them. Just as the neighbouring Idolaters and People of the Book were the most worthy of being invited by them to faith and guidance, they now after conclusive communication of the truth and proclamation of war, have become the most worthy of their swords. People who show a compromising attitude towards them because of their family and friendship ties will be regarded as those who have been unjust to their souls the most, as has been indicated in verse 23. Thus in verse 24, they are warned that they should wait until God delivers His verdict about them. The real spirit of faith and sincerity is kindled when a person has to wage war with one’s own kin. The expression “around you” refers to this very fact.

The words “and let them find sternness in you” imply that just as they, as a nation, are enemies of the believers, the believers too should reciprocate this. Until then, the hypocrites found a soft corner in their hearts and hence expected they could use them to achieve their objective. Now this situation must end.

The words “and you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits” can have two aspects. The hypocrites must not show any weakness in fighting against these. God helps His pious servants; if they adhere to piety, they will triumph and their opponents will be humiliated. The implication of God being with someone is that He will necessarily help them.

The second aspect is to warn the believers: they must abide by all the bounds of God in showing sternness and in waging war against the disbelievers. In no phase, should they exceed these bounds because God is only a companion of His pious people. Earlier, it has been emphasized that the covenants of those Idolaters and People of the Book who have abided by them should be fulfilled. Moreover, the sacred months must be shown respect. These words stress precisely this.

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[102] Believers! wage war against the disbelievers around you and let them find sternness in you. And you should know that God is with those who are conscious of their limits.

وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ اَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هٰذِهٖٓ اِيْمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَزَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَ
اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا اِلٰى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ اَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُوْنَ فِيْ كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوْ
مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ ۗ هَلْ يَرٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوْا ۗ صَرَفَ
اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾[103]

These verses refer to those hypocrites who in spite of all the warnings and admonitions sounded by this *sūrah* continued to adhere to their hypocrisy. In fact, their hypocrisy gradually increased. No warning from God could urge them to repent until death overtook them in this condition.

The word *sūrah* can refer to a particular *sūrah* of the Qur'ān or to some specific directive or part of it.

These hypocrites would go to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) just to put up a show of pretence and to satisfy the believers. There they would encounter new demands from the Qur'ān every day. They would be recited out various directives. These everyday directives would weigh down heavily on them. They did not have the courage to say anything openly against them. So, they would vent their emotions by passing sarcastic remarks. An example of these is cited in these verses. Their objective was to disparage the directives of God and His Messenger and to discourage the believers.

The answer given to such poisonous remarks is also cited. At no stage of their life do these element find an urge in them to repent and they die in this state of this disbelief.

The fact that the verses of the Qur'ān gradually increase the faith of the believers and make the hypocrisy of the hypocrites even more pronounced is not a metaphor. It is a statement of fact. Each directive of the Qur'ān opens up a sphere of competition for the Muslims and when they win in this sphere their faith receives encouragemment and the volition to win in other spheres until finally they gradually reach the highest point of honour. On the other hand, the hypocrites bear one deprivation after another and one defeat after another and ultimately become totally devoid of any speck of faith and resolve. Layers of hypocrisy one upon the other envelop their hearts to the extent that all the abilities which God has blessed them with at birth are trampled beneath and die away.

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[103] And when a *sūrah* is revealed, there are some among them also who ask: "Whose faith among you has it increased?" So, those who have actually believed, it increases their faith and they receive glad tidings from it. As for those whose hearts have an ailment, it increases their filth with another filth and they die as disbelievers. Do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice? Even then, they do not repent or take heed? And when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: "Is there anyone watching?" Then they slip away. God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand.

The question “do they not see that every year they are put through trials once or twice?” gives the reason why these people are deprived of the urge to repent. God is merciful and so He shakes and jolts people, whether of low or high status, once or twice a year to wake from their slumber of indifference and repent before Him. If these people too had reflected they would have come to know that their ailment has reached such an extent that the doors of repentance have been closed for them.

From such trials and incidents, people who have the urge to repent, learn a lesson. However, people who are deprived of this urge because of their misdeeds learn nothing from these trials. The hypocrites under discussion have reached this very stage. No reversal can open their eyes

Consider the sentence: “even then, they do not repent or take heed.” The first part points to their callousness and the second to their thick headedness. This is because repentance relates to the heart and taking heed relates to the intellect. In other words, their misdeeds have rendered their faculties of heart and intellect as useless.

The words “and when a *sūrah* is revealed, they gaze at one another: “is there anyone watching?” pictures how the hypocrites whisk away from the gatherings of the Prophet (sws). When the Prophet (sws) would call the believers on important occasions like preparing for a new campaign or informing them of new directives of the Qur’ān, these hypocrites too would reluctantly come just to put up a show. When they would see that something difficult was at hand and if they remained in the gathering, they would have to take responsibilities, they would furtively glance at one another. The implication being that they should leave the place if any of the believers is not watching them. They would then secretly slip away. This attitude of the Hypocrites is depicted in more detail in the Sūrah al-Nūr thus:

اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاِذَا كَانُوْا مَعَهٗ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوْا حَتّٰى يَسْتَاْذِنُوْهُ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِذَا اسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِبَعْضِ شَاْنِهِمْ فَاْذَنْ لِّمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَ
اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ؕ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِيْنَ يَتَسَلَّلُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا ۚ فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ يُخَالِفُوْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِهٖٓ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ اَوْ يُصِيْبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ

(٢٤: ٦٢-٦٣)

Only they are true believers who have faith in God and His Messenger. And when they are together for some collective task, they do not go away from there unless

> they seek permission from the Messenger. Those who go after seeking permission from you, only they are the ones who have faith in God and His Messenger. So, when they seek permission from you for some need they have, you can give permission to whomsoever you like and pray to God for their forgiveness. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. People! When the Messenger calls you, do not regard this calling to be similar to how you call one another. God fully knows those among you who have been secretly slipping away while hiding behind others. So, those people who been evading the Messenger's directive should fear that a trial may afflict them or a painful punishment visit them. (24:62-63)

The words "God has turned their hearts away because these are people who do not understand" mean that because of their own evasion, God turned their hearts away. It signifies a curse. In verse of Sūrah al-Ṣaff, it is similarly said: فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ.[104] When a person reaches this stage, his heart is sealed and it is evident from the verse under discussion that this is the consequence of his own misdeeds. The part "these are people who do not understand" implies that when they adopt this attitude even after warnings from God, their faculties are turned by God to wherever they want to go.

لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ
حَسْبِيَ اللّٰهُ ۖ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾[105]

Both these verses were revealed as a final warning. Though the address is general, it is evident from the context that they are directed towards people who did not of duly value the Prophet (sws) as a great favour done to the Arabs in particular. Indeed, he was a great favour to others too. The words "from among yourselves" show the nature of this favour as well as the fact that because he belongs to them the nature of his preaching will become conclusive.

The sentence "it weighs down heavily on him if you suffer" implies that contrary to their thinking that the Prophet (sws) will bring hardships to them, he is in fact very troubled to see if they are afflicted by them. He wants them to be secure from the hardships of not only this world, but also of the next. His desire is that they earn success in both worlds. Thus all his efforts and all his endeavours to educate them are for this very purpose. People who regard this life to be all that there is find his measures that are against their worldly interests weighing down heavily on them. The fact is that if these people knew the importance of the next world, they would have realized that all the worries of the Prophet (sws) are not for his own self; he actually wants to save them from worries and sorrows.

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[104] So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray.

[105] There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. It weighs down heavily on him if you suffer. He is desirous of your faith and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers. Thus if they turn away, say: God is sufficient for me. There is no deity except Him. I have trusted Him alone and He is the Lord of the glorious throne.

The expression “he is desirous of your faith” implies that if the Prophet (sws) is after them, it is not because he has his own agenda; his sole purpose is their welfare and wants them to accept faith. Just as an affectionate father always wishes well for his children, the Prophet (sws) too wants all the good of this world and the next for them. Those who do not value such concern are unfortunate.

Consider the attributes رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (embodiment affection and mercy). Evident in the first is revulsion to evil and in the second blessings of goodness and permanance of mercy. Both these attributes are from among God’s noble qaulities which are exactly used here for Muḥammad (sws). It is evident from this that in the matter of showing affection and mercy to the creatures the noble prophet was a manifestation of divine attributes. The words “and is an embodiment of affection and mercy for the believers” are an explanation of the Prophet (sws) being desirous of their faith. That is why there is no coordinating particle after حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ in حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

The Prophet (sws) is addressed in the last verse. If people do not value God’s great favour of sending a messenger to them, it is their own loss and not of him. Contrary to this, he is desirous of their faith and very concerned of their success in this world and the next. They are its sole beneficiaries and not the Prophet (sws). If they value him, they are only earning success in both worlds but they are not realizing this. Thus the Prophet (sws) should not be concerned about them and should clearly tell them that God is sufficent for him. If they do not accept his call, it does not mean that he will become helpless and alone. He who trusts the Lord of the glorious throne does not care if others do not care.

This brings me to an end to the explanation of this *sūrah* today, Friday, at 9 am. May God forgive our blemishes and make a place of the truth in our hearts

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
15 August 1969